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PETER WEIR 24 PAGE SPECIAL





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PRODUCING

AN INTERVIEW WITH

CHARLES H.



WOODY

JOFFE



Woody Allen is more than a cult figure; he is a very successful one. While much is being written and said about the man, and his films, little attention has been focused on Charles H. Joffe, his manager and producer. But Joffe's role in Woody Allen's success is considerable: he handles all his financial matters and negotiated the arrangement with United Artists giving his client total creative control.

Woody Allen is not Joffe's only client, however. Rollins & Joffe, which he founded with Jack Rollins 25 years ago, handles 18 of the big names in comedy, including Dick Cavett, Robin Williams and Billy Crystal.

Joffe, who sees himself as a manager first and a producer by circumstance, believes in putting long-term career interests ahead of a quick profit. He speaks proudly of being able to follow creative, rather than business, considerations.

Joffe had just returned from the set of Woody Allen's new, and untitled, film when he spoke to *Cinema Papers*' Los Angeles correspondent, David Tietelbaum.

When did your association with Woody Allen begin?

It was about 20 years ago. He was a joke writer and someone suggested that he write something for Mike Nichols and Elaine May, whom we were handling. So, he came to see us and I found him a dry little kid. But he was as funny as hell and we have been together ever since.

Did you realize then how big he would become?

The talent was always there, though when he started he was de-

finitely a struggling performer.

How has your working relationship with him changed over the years?

He has matured, so the relationship has changed, in that what he wants from us now is not the same as he wanted before, and vice versa. Woody has grown to a point where he, over anybody, is so well established that he doesn't have to rely on us anywhere near as much.

Is he the same person when he is directing a film as he is portrayed on screen?

No, he is not funny at all. It's a dandy amount of time, there is no joke-making.

Away from the set, is he more like what he is on the screen?

Yes. He is shy, awkward in groups and generally uncomfortable. When he is with friends, however, he can be himself because he knows that they will understand him. Really with strangers will be try to be funny.

After all this time, do you think you understand him?

I understood most of him. My God, after 23 years, together I would have to.

Chen is a management firm that works on a very strong creative level. We only have 10 clients and we build up close relationships. Nobody has left our management for years and years, that is a pretty good record. Billy Crystal has been with us an year, Robert Klein 12, Menna Markson, Dick Cavett about 18, Tom Poston 24 and "Mark" (Robert Williams) since the day he started.

Has being a manager helped you as a producer?

No question about it.

Is there ever a conflict between the two?

I am going through that with a client at the moment, and I have decided not to produce his work. Generally, we don't produce a client's work if we feel outside voices won't negatively affect their work. Take Mark, for example, who is at Menna at the moment doing Popeye.

Did you see Jules Feiffer's script for "Popeye"?

Yes, and I thought it was wonderful. Robert Altman (the director) has promised to stay close to the script, it is not an improvisational film. We have absolute high hopes for the film. Larry, who is one of my partners, called me from Mexico yesterday and said all the footage was very high.

So, your heart is in the management side, you do the production side because it helps protect your clients. —

Usually, yes. Occasionally I do a film that has nothing to do with any of my clients.

You have to deal with studio executives, directors, writers, agents — the whole gamut. Do you have different ways of dealing with these people?

No, I am who I am. After 25 years of dealing with all these people you have mentioned, one's



person is established and you stay who you are. I did a little differ only with each client, though because they want you to be different.

We are very hard on our clients and that is why the relationships last for so long. They know we are not going to tell them they are good when they're not, or that a script is good if it isn't.

Why did you go to United Artists when you started producing for Woody Allen?

A man named David Dickar was there and he gave Woody and me the opportunity to do films with the least of interference. It was an attitude of "Hey, we trust you, go do your film."

Is it true Woody Allen takes a retainer salary to maintain that freedom?

Yes. Money isn't important to Woody, but the film is. U.A. doesn't even have script approval, which is quite amazing. We just do some idea to them. We might, as a courtesy, show the script to some of our friends there but leave for approval.

What was the first Woody Allen film you did at U.A.?

Bananas. The only condition they put on it was that we do the film for a number of dollars.

Have any other studios tried to tempt you away?

Every one of them. They would like a bidding war to go on to get Woody. Right now, he controls it up at U.A.

Is he going to renew it?

Director and writer Woody Allen, who is producing and managed by Charles H. Joffe.



Robert Williams of Mark and Woody, who is one of Joffe's clients. Williams is currently filming Popeye in Mexico.



serious. I hope he does more

How did the staffs react when they heard he was making a serious film?

They thought it was true.

How accurately can you gauge the success of a film? Are you often out-right?

No, not at all. I know Woody and I can gauge if something is good. I also know whether it is going to expand Woody's audience. I am a little better in my guts than the people of U.S. when they see a film for the first time.

Does Woody Allen make his films for an audience?

that the European market has now opened up. Of course he likes that — he is a realist. One doesn't want to write and put it in a desk drawer just because it hasn't sold out, to build his catalogue.

Were you surprised when "Annie Hall" won the Academy Award?

Yes, because the competition was tremendous, from *Star Wars* to *Turning Point*. I just thought it was really, it was dominated.

I hadn't prepared anything to say and I didn't even remember, as I walked off the stage, what I had said. I was so numb.

When I was a child I used to stare at the set, or listen to the radio, and think, 'Gee, will I ever be able to accomplish that?' Now it's not so important. I understand a lot more about it, and I can understand why Woody didn't want to participate in it.

Woody doesn't believe films should compete. He feels there is no logical basis by which to compare *Juno* and *Star Wars*.

Do you think the awards should be put in categories, like musical or science fiction?

Then it would get like the Greenwys, where everything is so broken down that they lose their civility.

The Academy Awards are somewhat of a pain for our business, but for the artist it is confusing. For instance, this year *Nanna Rose* is nominated as the best picture of the year, and *Sally Field* for best performance by an actress. But *Merry Mail*, who directed it and who got the performance out of the actress, isn't nominated. How is that explained?

Were you surprised "Blackhat" received so few nominations?

Yes. I expected the film would be nominated as best picture, and I thought Woody would be nominated as best director because he was the choice of the Directors' Guild of America. Also, the New York Film Critics named Sam best director of the year.

How much does an Academy Award mean in cash terms?

It runs with every film. I don't know how much *The Deerhunter* was helped by it.

What about "Annie Hall"?

I would guess it has added about \$5 million in rentals in the U.S. That would have meant \$10 to \$12 million more at breakfast.

Do you think an Academy Award has a bigger effect in the U.S. or international markets?

Again, it depends on the files. I believe the sword moved the way the



Top: Mary (Queen Mother) and Isaac (Wendy Allen) speak about negative capitalism at Staff Visitation Night. Wendy Allen is a student from Austin Hall, which built additional.

It is a little bit different:

Which film has been the biggest commercial success so far?

It will end up being *Manhattan*. *Amos* Hall is second to that, and it had the advantage of winning an Academy Award.

And the biggest failure?

There have been more that have lost money. The ones that made the least money are **Intensions** and **Buena Vista**.

It was reported that Woody Allen expected "Unionen" to be a commercial failure.

None of us would have been surprised. But we all thought it was right for him to do something.

Never. He doesn't give five seconds thought to a audience. He just knows he is right.

There are people in this business whose goal is to have a big box-office success. But you don't think of them as making artistic films. They are just going for the biggest numbers they can get. That is not Woody's concern. He's not interested in money. He is interested in his work, and he hopes his work will reach a large audience.

If Woody really wanted to double his audience he would do a film with Eric beautiful naked girls. But he is not interested.

So, the appreciation of his work by the people doesn't affect him?

He likes the fact that people admire his films, that critics have been very supportive of him and

50% has been a result of a decrease

What would be a typical Woody Allen haireff?

Up until Manhattan, the most we have ever done is \$100 million, which was for Manhattan. But because the cost of living has gone up, and all the union negotiations, that \$4 million would now be \$8 million. The \$10 million we are doing at the moment is about \$8 or \$9 million. Two years ago, we would have done it for about \$6 million.

Plus il a sembler d'être le "Amie
Mati" and "Mati" (1999)



Woody to become an international star, and got him exposed to several difficult areas in the U.S.

Did the Academy Award give you any added legitimacy?

Yes. It made it easier for me to approach people, because the agents could then say, "Well, you know he has won an Academy Award." Deacon and I, when I might have had a hard time approaching, became accessible.

Do you think Woody Allen's films have had a social impact?

No, other than that Diane Keaton created a style after Anne Hall.

Do you believe any films have an impact on social values?

Absolutely. I think *The Chess Syndrome* made a lot of people aware of a "we better look at this" issue.

What happened with Anne Hall was that a lot of people probably came away with a better understanding of breaking up with loved ones. But I don't think it changed anything. It was a personal film.

Ronnie (Diane Keaton) and Frederick (Woody Allen) in *Woody Allen's first all-romantic feature, *Annie Hall**

and people react to personal films in a personal way.

Is his new film personal?

All his films are. The style and content are a little different, but it still came out of Woody.

When is that due for release?

October or November.

Is Woody Allen involved with the marketing?

He is involved in every facet on his films. I don't make unilateral decisions on these things. We bring our plans to U.A. and work things out together.

We had long discussions with U.A. to get them to understand how we wanted our films advertised. You look at the posters of *Annie Hall* and *Mishkin*, they don't perform comedy, do they?

Why doesn't Woody Allen like his films being shown on television?



He doesn't like commercials interrupting the film and he doesn't like them being edited. And, for the most part, commercial television requires that.

Annie Hall has been released on television, but we controlled that. There were no edits and few commercials. I wanted it shown because

Godfrey (Woody Allen) and Diane Keaton in *Mishkin*

I wanted the masses to see Woody in a different form. I thought it would expose him to a lot of people who would remember the early Woody Allen days.



Above: Author E. G. Mitchell bids good-bye to his estranged wife, Dr. Katherine Ford, in *Weekend Update*. Right: Tina Turner (Marilyn) who left him for another woman. (Marilyn)

Sometimes I don't know how that's going to be.

Are you optimistic about the general

direction of the film industry?

Over the next 10 or 15 years the market place will change. There will be less theatres but, if cable takes on the importance that it appears to be doing, the use of video discs and computers, the market place will remain important.

Among the people you manage, there are perhaps five potential Johnny Carson replacements. Is there any conflict?

No, our clients don't compete. The interests in their careers are different. I don't think Marty Mull wants to sit in Johnny Carson's chair. He is starring in a film for Paramount, and it is going to be a very big film, called *The Serial*. If that film is successful, he might have a pretty good film career.

But there would room for a conflict.

Sure, but that is talked out very carefully with every client, on terms of where they want to go and what their interests are.

Sometimes, two clients come up for the same part, but you can't help that. Fortunately, we have built a relationship with our clients where there is no distrust. In the interest of all our clients, I wouldn't surprise one for another. If NBC wanted David Letterman and not Martin Mull, or vice versa, they know I wouldn't sell out on either side.

I know that Letterman is going to do his own show for an hour and a half a day on NBC in daytime. So, I don't believe they are thinking of moving him to *The Johnny Carson Show* if they are considering him in a first 35 weeks with options.

That could be a test run to see how he handles a regular hour and a half.

I don't think they are looking at that. I think they are looking to fill their needs. We haven't talked about it with NBC. Obviously, they are not willing to talk about, or even mention a replacement for Johnny.

Do you ever feel you are over-extending yourself with too many clients, or too many projects?

We never take on more than 10 clients. That is a rule for the fear of us. Sometimes I feel I have taken on too many projects, but when that period passes, I am okay.

Do you feel you need the pressure?

No. I don't let business interfere with my lifestyle. I am home at night and I don't give up my weekends unless it is an emergency. I keep a pretty good balance.

Do you have any unfulfilled aspirations in show business?

If I can get through dry by day and enjoy each day, that is it. *

Do you see cable television as important to the film industry?

Television has always been a big source of income, and cable television is now becoming viable.

Some films in the future are going to rely on television to recoup their costs, and every film company has the right to sell them. We have made a deal with Woody Allen Glass where U.A. doesn't have that right. I won't allow it in his deal.

That, of course, takes away a big source of income, but I am dealing with an artist who is not concerned about dollars.

For how much was "Anne Hall" sold to television?

About \$6 million. They ran it once a year for two or three years.

What other projects are you working on?

I have Steve Gordon, who I think is the best comedy writer next to Woody, and he wants a chance to direct. So, we are getting something up and Dudley Moore is going to be in it.

I recently had an experimental film called *House of Gull* with Tim Mathis, Charles Hulse and Bob







NATIONALISM IN AUSTRALIAN CINEMA

Anne B. Hutten

Feature film production during the 1970s was first the product of a piece of legislation, rather than an urgency or natural inclination by individuals to produce their films, some what later. Before the Australian Film Development Corporation *Act* was introduced in 1970, there was a nascent underground film culture that has continued and grown in strength over this period. It produces personal films, and films that reveal little fear of the cinema superstructure. Feature films, on the other hand, tend to be regarded as the pinnacle of one's cinema career, and were designed to be a part of the national identity, rather than as a vehicle for experiment or personal expression.

The feature film industry has, therefore, chosen to align itself to the causes of popular culture, to promote the possibilities of mass consciousness (and its obverse of social control) it is a divisive cinema, consciously dogged by the stigma of an elitist prototype — the American film.

Against this, the industry's legislative cause — "significant Australian content" — has struggled towards definition. This content has brought with it all the connotations of classic Australian nationalism, ideas and images more applicable to the turn of the century than the era of nuclear reactions.

Nationalism, in its juxtaposition with the causes of progress or modernisation through the vehicle of popular culture, can be seen to express three stages of growth: "tradition, transition and modernity" — in the early years of our

repeated film industry, two basic trends emerged — the older comedy and the period film — and both can be related to the traditions of Australian culture and the beliefs of Australian nationalism.

A film such as *Newsfront*, in its ability for self-criticism and observation, seemed to indicate that a period of transition in the Australian cinema was at hand. Many people expected that films would immediately go on to better things, but every period has an area of overlap. Some signs can be discerned of a continuation towards modernity: the films that reflect the real multi-ethnic and social reality making of Australian society (though still not entirely cognisant of the complexities of the people they might portray) have made a significant breakthrough in their themes (and at last surfaced from the underground tradition of social awareness to reach a large audience).

The National Self-Image and the Aesthetic of the Period Film

Nationalism is an ideological creation rather than an inherited or a natural law. To be schematic I am suggesting that the idea creators imposed this doctrine upon their portrayal of Australia rather than that empirical study of Australia inspired their nationalism.

Michael Rog, "An Historic Survey of Australian Nationalism", *Personnel Director Magazine*.

The films that were produced during the first few years of the AFDC were predominantly set within a contemporary framework, yet the majority dealt in terms of comedy or fantasy, not in terms of politics or issues, argument or beliefs. The few films that followed the strategy of contemporary realism, initiated by the Commonwealth film *Over the Hills*, *There or Thereabouts* and *Over the Hills*, were purely unsuccessful in comparison with the popularity of the older formulae and exploitation films.

The hypothesis is that the bourgeoisie resistance to feature producing (intermittent visibility and significant Australian content) and the resulting contradictions within Australian society and politics (the influence of the U.S. coloring the manner and style of Australians to define Australia) ended in filmmakers attempting to establish "safe" narrative formulas.

The Vietnam issue was not only a catalyst in the Labor victory of 1972, but was also a part of a new era of social awareness in Australia, with the Labor Party initiating many necessary "Public Sector" reforms. Yet the amount of controversy over the rate of social and political change that such policies represented meant that during those years the image of Australian society was in a constant state of flux. The stability of the common self-image of classic nationalism — white, middle-class, rural, working class and its levels of mythical or aristocratic — was particularly threatened by political reflection or not being given to the common ethic and social mores that composed Australian society.

Equally then, with awareness, the effects of "significant Australian content" though profitable in the sense of trying to establish a

cultural cinema and to stem the flow of cultural determinism) was just as hard to construct. A new resolution of the dilemma of this cinema became period film, with a large element of nostalgia — that is, if unable to define what Australia is, it can be solved by restoring the myths of what it has been (see Table 1).

Though this new emergence of nostalgia was given impetus by the myth and discourse sponsored by the Labor party, it has been an almost continual ideological presence in literary and historic argument since its inception at the turn of the century. The difference lies in the importance of the argument and the intensity of its social permeation. A scholarly debate in *Melange* will not affect the collective consciousness in the same way as social change or an ethnic being exposed by popular culture.¹ Conversely, the level of nostalgia or anxiety of the majority of these period films represent a fairly pervasive nationalism operating mainly as an aesthetic, without a congruent theory in the ideology from whence it comes.

This is as much tempered by 'international mobility' or audience considerations as it is a signal about the intensity of the convictions of some of Australia's filmmakers. Yet the situation is complicated within the Australian cinema by the lack of any real film tradition and, therefore, no continuous or consistent representations of national identity. The reconstruction of the Australian silent film can be archived (and its critical value) presents a somewhat paradoxical continuum. Hence it would be logical that feature film, in an effort to capture the popular imagination, would reflect the nation just more often than challenge it.²

Significantly, the first, and much underrated, period film *Between Wars* (1914) was a (partial) failure. With an original script by Frank Moorhouse³ and directed by Michael Thorpe,⁴ it was probably the first Australian feature film since 1910 that not only involved a significant 'level of argument',⁵ but also had a certain tactical relevance. The film traces the career of an Australian doctor from World Wars I to 2, and as a result explores the background of Australian social and political change, employing an amount of analogical imagery between the two. The clarity of the film's argument (and it is somewhat obscured by the not always successful attempts at an 'intimate subtext')⁶ or a coldly objective directing style.

In 1915 a new approach to the period film was used in two Australian and critical success stories *Sunday Too Far Away* and *Peak at Hanging Rock*. These films retained a style of 'nostalgic' films, in which the 'level of argument', apparent in a film like *Between Wars*, is toned away. The major emphasis, and successful appeal, is in the level of imagery drawing heavily on nostalgia for classic national themes and images, with even the 'level of modest' sometimes sub-



Arthur Dwyer and Judy Lyons in Michael Thorpe's period film, *Between Wars*

TABLE 1: PERIOD FILMS

DATE	FILM	DIRECTOR	SCREENPLAY	SOURCE	APPROXIMATE BUDGET
1914	<i>Between Wars</i>	Michael Thorpe	Frank Moorhouse	Original	\$170,000
1915	<i>Sunday Too Far Away</i>	Sam Hannan	John Edgar	Original	\$200,000
1915	<i>Peak at Hanging Rock</i>	Peter Blair	Gill Green	Novel by Jean Lindsay	\$200,000
1916	<i>Mad Dog Morgan</i>	Philippe Mass	Philippe Mass	Novel by Miles Innes	\$474,800
1916	<i>Caddis</i>	Don Grimble	Jean Lott	Novel by G. Campbell	\$200,000
1916	<i>The Devil's Playground</i>	Fred Schepel	Fred Schepel	Original	\$100,000
1916	<i>Break of Day</i>	Ken Hammett	Cliff Green	Original	\$81,000
1917	<i>The Gates of Wisdom</i>	George Seaton	George Seaton	Original	\$100,000
1917	<i>The Magic Tree</i>	Karen Duden	Michael Pitt	Novel by Robert Bly	\$699,000
1917	<i>The Picture Show Man</i>	John Long	John Long	Novel by H. P. Lovecraft	\$100,000
1918	<i>The Stranded</i>	Don Grimble	Don Grimble	Novel by G. O'Connor	\$100,000
1918	<i>Weekend of Swindlers</i>	Tom Jeffrey	Peter Yuleman	Novel by Peter Yuleman	\$100,000
1918	<i>The Chase of Jimmie Blacksmith</i>	Fred Schepel	Fred Schepel	Novel by Thomas Kennedy	\$1,200,000
1918	<i>Swindlers</i>	Phil Hayes	Phil Hayes	Original	\$505,000
1919	<i>My Brilliant Career</i>	Gilbert Armitage	Elwyn Williams	Novel by Miles Franklin	\$650,000
1919	<i>Dawn</i>	Ken Hammett	Joy Cecil	Original	\$192,000
1919	<i>The Odd Angry Bird</i>	Yash-Jaffry	Joy Cecil	Novel by Yash-Jaffry	\$650,000

FILMS NOT STRICTLY "PERIOD" — narrative tends to transcend its era

DATE	FILM	DIRECTOR
1911	<i>Griffith Thompson Wins the Alamo</i>	Joe Sherman
1912	<i>Liberty</i>	John D. Murphy, Tom Ransall
1913	<i>The True Story of Salim's Hero</i>	Fred Schepel, David Baker
1914	<i>One of the Outcasts</i>	Richard H. Little
1915	<i>Ellen Foster</i>	Tom Ransall
1917	<i>Journeys Among Women</i>	Tom Ransall
1918	<i>The Night the Printer</i>	Tom Ransall

The distribution house Griffith and the 'western genre' is not necessarily a qualitative one. For example, Joe Sherman's films only use the boundaries of each to convey a narrative and have been used to make a rather tedious film. *Griffith Thompson Wins the Alamo* (1911), the 1915s background *Griffith Thompson Wins the Alamo* (1911), and the 1918s background *Griffith Thompson Wins the Alamo* (1918) are all based on the same story, with the 1918s version of the story being a more complex and sophisticated one. The 1918s version is a good example of a film of this genre, with a good story and a good director.

In a similar vein, *Journeys Among Women* is a feminist statement and progressive, even though it is not a feminist film. The choice to make *Ellen Foster* a light-hearted 'new wave' and comedy tends to fill the real consequences of 'Dawn' and a period-based piece with a contemporary approach.

1. Much of the examination of Australian cinema in the past is only at the national cinema, particularly the production and distribution of cinema by the state. See, for example, *Australian Cinema: A History* by Geoffrey Blainey (1975) which has been revised with the period of the 1970s and 1980s. This was a very good book.

2. See C. W. Bailey, *Argument in Popular Culture* (London: 1975) particularly section three.

3. This has been followed by other films and also other films of the same time and in a way of production in the case of the film of the same name which are more recent than the approach to film-making.

4. Moorhouse has written a collection of essays (both style and content) which is in *The Australian Film: A History* and *Other Essays*. The *Essays* are collected in *Collected Essays* in connection with the release of *Between Wars* which are to indicate that Moorhouse had wanted to indicate to the public — the two styles of writing are markedly different.

5. See H. Armitage, *My Brilliant Career* (London: 1919) pp. 25-31.

For instance, a major difference between literature and film is that the written word exists in time and film exists in space.⁴ Film cannot reveal thoughts, as they are to written in a book. The director can give us external signs to imply the thoughts of the characters (or they can be completely uninterested in dialogue) but we can never know them. This is the essential ambiguity of narrative film. In this case, with so many of the narratives concerned with the conflict between an individual's and the institution (either social, racial or religious) e.g. *Mid Day Meagan* and the law, or *Cadell* and marriage, the fundamental problem (with original scripts as well) is how to reveal these conflicts, which often exist only as private thoughts.

This posed no problem to Peter Weir in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, because the most characters, as originally written by Joan Lindsay, were veiled in mystery and ambiguity. Lindsay's novel, though essentially a trivial work, provided a marvelous vehicle for film. Weir in his court reverence for Alfred Hitchcock, seeks in the sensitivity of mystery and the supernatural quality of the novel to create an emotional and uncritical style of filmmaking.

The opposite of this situation is *The Slingshot*. There, Kevin Dunlop's adaptation of Ronald Mink's overly sentimental epic about life in a Queensland country town in the years around World War I. Set against the supposed maturity of the main character (a well-off, but middle-class youth) and his introduction to life, death, love, loss, etc., there are a few serious plot points, but the overall effects are very scattered. This was a particular problem in the scripting and casting of the youth (Christopher Patu) who was given reasons to enter and kept a facial expression of aversion no matter what he confronted. Hence, we could never know what he thought or if he was serious.

The question of World War I, and Australia's role in it, was rarely a vehicle for the "Australianization" of one character (played by Robert Helmsman), as occurs from his warlike British family. He is made to deliver a speech at a patriotic rally all the reasons why we should be proud of our country (there is no analysis of his position or the private thoughts that made him seek his ethnicistic conclusion).

Another example of the unstable shift in emphasis between the change from novel to film can be found in *The Guttering of Wisdom* and *My Brilliant Career*. Both have a woman as the protagonist and both track closely to the major events of their original, but the films tend to minimize the crucial feminist themes (Robert is correct: fear) of women rebelling against the role that society and their are demanded of them. Instead, both films emphasize the more recognizable, Australian preoccupations with class, those democratic and egalitarian beliefs of Australians.

Henry Handel Richardson's *Lionel*, in the film version, is a poor girl at an expensive school made to feel shame for her humble origins. She is the all-mannered country school, who "never herself socially by being a gifted painter, which no amount of class hierarchy can deny, but takes advantage of the class problem. Yet in the novel, she is also the girl who seems to run and do "unfeminine" things, symbolized in the film by her foul run through the park the day she leaves school. But this not only gave a small indication of the depth of repression that had reared her all those years.

Fredrick's *My Brilliant Career* was written in an solitary relation of Henry Lawson with certain references to the novel — *Peter and Gordon* — and with all the uncertainty



Robert Helmsman (Robert Helmsman) holds up some fireworks in Philip Morris's *Mid Day Meagan*

works of his era (written at the age 16) a girl references to the undesirable Chinese and a housing debate to become one of the first Australians, the rural workers, the people who made Australia "great". All this is related in the form of society's desirable role — marriage — against which is Sybil's desire for something more than just marriage — a literary career. (The story is that Richardson as well as Franklin had to write under male pseudonyms.) The film does not make its points as strongly as the novel or rather a changed-up love story with a twist the says "no". It makes very strong use of the class theme, with beautiful contrasts in the art direction between the wealthy grazing land and the head of the real Australia (I saw a horse) — and, rugged and romantic.

Interestingly, most of the films about women (except *Picnic* which was more of a collage view of them) follow the Lawson tradition — that a woman can become the subject of a story if she takes on and copes with the male role. Obviously, then, this dictum also has affinities with the film *Cadell*.

Cadell, the story of a woman who leaves her husband because he's having an affair, takes

the children and goes to work as a waitress to support her family during the Depression years actually gives a stronger sense of the discrimination by society against the lone mother than either of the other two films. But *Cadell*, too, has a changed-up genre (though the source was hardly more interesting), so while these films touch upon current feminist concerns they end up downgrading them by introducing commercial pulpiness.

Period films, then, have been covered well, and handled by their source material. The novel and film offer totally different modes of representation of conceptual consciousness. These films, dominated by the literary tradition of the narrative, can only register the external events of plot from point to point in space. The use of film techniques and certain styles can give indications of the internal world of the characters within a narrative, but period films, in their constant use of Australian style (with few exceptions), have been devoid of the stamp of personal consciousness of the filmmaker.

The choice to create the microcosmic plots that are illustrative of basic traditional Australian values, without a subtext

Continued on p. 132

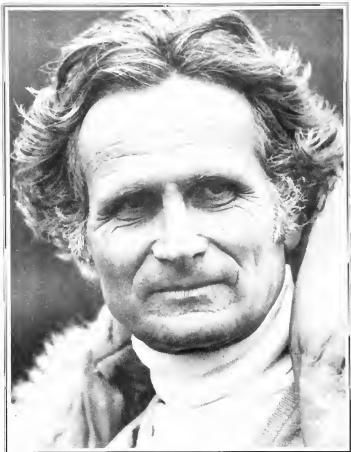
11. D. R. Hunt



Geoffrey Fyfe (Director) and Christopher Patu (Robert) in a scene from Kevin Dunlop's film adaptation of *The Slingshot*



Philip Morris as John and Helen Morris in *Cadell* during the break-up sequence. Don Chaffin's *Cadell*



JEROME HELLMAN

Tom Ryan

The opening shot of *Promises in the Dark* looks down a highway in the mid-West of the U.S. and establishes a mood which is perhaps the most frequent of all in recent American cinema: the film's central character, Dr. Alexander Kendall (Marlene Marzoff), and to a lesser extent, the other characters, are in a state of emotional flux.

Enclosed in her car, flicking the radio from station to station, her face and her posture speaking of frustration, the impression is of a woman trapped. The deliberate manner of her driving suggests a belief that she is under threat, the extended glance at a couple embracing on a picnic cot providing a clue to the nature of this threat. Her eye contact with the female of the couple forces her to look away, as if she has seen something that she shouldn't.

The idea of the journey, introduced here, recurs throughout the film, as Dr. Kendall finds herself forced into situations which will allow her no room to withdraw. Her battle with them takes her from a self-imposed isolation to the tentative beginnings of a new contact with the living.

From the enclosed safety of her car, to the protective armor of her professional status, and to the desperate determination of her quest — all of these signify a retreat in the way she sees things — she is drawn into the world of the vulnerable by her contact with Buffy Keene (Kathleen Beller), a 17-year-old girl stricken with a terminal cancer, with Buffy's parents (Susan Clark and Ned Beatty) and with Dr. Jim Sandman (Michael Brandon), the chief oncologist at the hospital where she works.

Her initial relinquishment of the sort of involvement that will expose upon her sense of security is challenged by Buffy's and Jim's separate demands that she should become involved in their lives. Her attempt to join Buffy's case to her male superior at the hospital is subverted by Buffy's trust in her, and her refusal of anything but a professional relationship with Jim is cast aside by his rejection of the terms of contact she has laid down.

In a familiar way, she finds that the work she had thought would protect her from emotional danger is, in fact, carrying the seeds of that danger.

Inevitably, and unfortunately, discussion of *Promises in the Dark* has concentrated on the film's closing moments, when Dr. Kendall switches off the life-support system that has been

keeping Buffy alive, an act which presents an ethical dilemma. For while it is consistent with Buffy's request to her, it continues the distance of Buffy's parents.

The film, thank fully, and paradoxically, avoids dwelling on the debate at least in any explicit fashion, for any attempt to pursue such broad issues would only be at the expense of the particular and personal focus of the drama as has dictated.

Its failure at the point of this act, and its presentation of it as a key moment in Dr. Kendall's moral journey, in my view, ought to refer one back to the film's central narrative moment. And that has to do with the processes of her growth towards self-discovery, towards a recognition of her limits finally, and an acceptance of it and the danger that it entails for her.

The film is directed by Jerome Hellman, whose career as a producer spans 15 years: *The World Of Henry Osuna* (1964), *A Fine Madness* (1966), *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), *The Day Of The Locust* (1975), *Coming Home* (1978) and *Promises in the Dark*. It is a most impressive debut as a director, to be admired for its emotional restraint, for its subtly defined characters, and for the splendid collection of performances from its cast.

You started your production career working as her intern in New York, producing programs like "The Kaiser Aluminum Show", "Philo", and "Playhouse 90". Do you think of that now as a constructive beginning?

Yes. In those early days, television in the U.S. wasn't as big a commercial enterprise as it is now, and there was a great deal of creative freedom. It attracted a lot of young people from colleges, who had been part of drama departments around the country and then wanted to represent America. They moved to New York and had an opportunity that has not existed since in the U.S.

The writers found a wide open market and presented subject matter which, by today's standards, would be considered questionable and controversial. It was a very



Dr. Alexander Kendall (Marlene Marzoff) attends to Buffy (Kathleen Beller) who is connected to a life-support system. Jerome Hellman's *Promises in the Dark*.

stimulating time and it developed a lot of exciting young talent, including people who are today in the vanguard of the film industry and theatre.

Things stayed that way until the shift in emphasis from live drama to tape and film. The economic impact of television made itself felt, and inevitably it became a more commercial and restrictive medium.

The pressure of having to go live to an audience has been demanding.

It was just like an opening night in the theatre. The complexities of making a show — the three-camera system, and the necessity of just doing it once — created a tremendous edge. There was a pride of the best kind of creative tension involved and you would often have a disastrous rehearsal and then a performance with



Sally (Jessie Raphael) and Bob (Bruce Dern) in Mel Aubrey's *Coming Home*, which Helman produced.

everyone absolutely terrified.

What sort of rehearsal time was you allowed on a program like "Playhouse 90"?

The *Playhouse 90s* rehearsal for almost two weeks, while a special one-hour show would rehearse for the better part of a week. The performance would then be used as the last day of rehearsal.

Are there any productions you worked on which you recall with particular pleasure?

During most of this time, I was working as an agent and packager. My function had much more to do with putting the elements together, selling them and absorbing the profits. I am deservingly, then it did with functioning creatively while it. I guess the closest I came to this was with *The Kaiser Aluminum Hour*, where I participated as the executive producer and worked on a rotating basis with three directors: George Roy Hill, Franklin Schaffner and Fidler Cook.

So, forgetting my judgments about quality, *The Kaiser Aluminum Hour* shows were the ones I have the strongest feelings about. They were really the start of my producing career, as opposed to my role as an orchestrator and entrepreneur.

You have produced six films since 1964, directing one of them. While one might ask this question of a playwright as a novelist, why so few producers?

I don't know. It seems to be an outgrowth of my process, in the sense that I don't have any ambition of duplicating my past experiences. My objectives, when I got out of packaging and gave up my business as an agent, were very personal and what motivated

me more than anything else was the desire to do things that on one level or another reflected my sensibility.

The simple truth is that it has taken me a very long time, in such case to find things that I really care about and which I can somehow push through the system.

All those film deals, in one way or another, with contemporary problems, particularly those facing individual characters who attempt to come to terms with these new wars in the world. Has this been a conscious design on your part?

I think it is an unconscious design in that I am governed by what interests me the most and what I feel most concerned to dramatically. Part of it may simply be a result of my own conditioning. I don't have any background in theater, so my grasp and my command of it is probably limited. My progress as a producer on an interim, has been a direct result of personal experience. I am drawn to the things that, experientially, I feel I can bring the most to.

You have worked with four directors: George Roy Hill, Irving Kershner, John Schlesinger and Mel Aubrey. What part did you play once the productions were under way?

If you asked the directors involved, they would probably say each film was a very close collaboration. George was a very good friend and close, and we had years of work experience behind us before we made *The World of Henry Otter*. George trusted me, and, as a result, allowed me full access to his process.

I think a characteristic of all those relationships was that there was never any confusion about where functions, responsibilities and authority began and ended. I really had, and still have, a tremendous respect for the creative

process and for people whose talents I admire. And, from having observed how directors work for so many years, I was able to collaborate without confusing myself about my role. I deliberately refuse to say that much of them would say, if asked, that it was an extraordinary collaboration. As a result I could participate on every level — not as a confrontational kind of collaboration, but in a mutually supportive one.

I was able to remain very close to the production and, I think, had a significant influence on every level working on the script, seeing the film, discussing the work in progress, looking at dailies, and working right through the cuts, from first to last. Certainly, on the last example of films with Schlesinger, I would say I had a very intimate involvement.

Is the creative process a system of *muscle*, rather than you surrendering some sort of personal control?

Absolutely. I think that is a very legitimate form of collaboration and I welcome it with people I work with. I don't think the best results are achieved by pounding others and shouting people down.

Some critics have claimed "Coming Home" goes well on the Vietnam war and the opposition to it. What is your reaction to that sort of criticism?

It is hard enough to deal with the reality is that we chose to make a film about one specific aspect of the war, namely, to deal with it in terms of its effect on people. It was a choice that was made at the outset. We weren't attempting an *Apocalypse Now* or *The Deer Hunter* i.e., a gross examination of the events and the violence and so on in direct terms.

The film was, in fact, an outgrowth of Jessi Raphael's reaction to her exposure as a special cord

hospital in Long Beach, California. Jessi felt very strongly about these men, who were in wheelchairs and who were experiencing misery about the conditions they found in the U.S. Their feelings were correct according to me when she approached me about taking on the film.

All of those involved in the film felt that it was important to try to deal with that segment of the experience, and to do it as honestly as we were able. We felt under obligation to try to make an impact. In those terms, I am not doing by the criterion. I feel there is room for a dozen films about Vietnam. One one about the impact of the war on the Vietnamese people I didn't see any of that in *Apocalypse Now* and I certainly didn't see it in *The Deer Hunter*.

On a subject as large as Vietnam, there is room for any number of films which collectively will make up a mosaic, and which will present various perspectives on what the reality of those events was.

In dramatic terms, are you happy with the way things are resolved in the film? I am speaking in particular about the suicide of Bob (Bruce Dern)....

I have conversations about the end of the film, though not specifically about Bob's suicide. I think we had structural problems with the last third of the film and these began with the collaboration between Sally (Jessi Raphael), Bob and Luke (Van Vleet). These problems were never quite solved and that extends right through to the final sequence where Bob commits suicide.

Obviously, that's how I feel about the film at this time. But it is certainly a film that I love, and I am really proud to have been involved in making it.

Why did you decide to direct "The Women in the Dark," rather than produce it for someone else?



Sally and her boyfriend: *Fredrick in the Dark*



The parents (Susan Clark and Neil Patrick Harris) visit at the hospital. *Promises in the Dark*

A comparison of reviews really. By the time I did *Crucial Hours*, I felt myself starting to feel at the limitations of my involvement. It was my fifth film, and, while it was difficult and complicated in a lot of ways, it wasn't a new experience.

The problems by and large were problems that were familiar to me: the unknown. I didn't feel directly and personally challenged on the same way I had by my earlier work. I did feel who knew happened in the future I just had to go on and do it myself. So, that was the beginning.

Was the idea brought to you, or did you work on it from the beginning?

The original concept was brought to me by Larry Minick, a writer like all of my oldest friends and clients, and wrote several of *The Keller Addictions* shows. He had the idea for some time and had put a commission to do a draft of the script that when he had turned it in, the people he was working with had backed off, feeling it was too touchy. So he sat it to me, as a friend, asking me to evaluate it.

At the time I received it, I had already decided that what I wanted to do next was direct. I read Larry's script, which is incredibly different than the final film, though the most important significant elements were all there, and it attracted me. It was awfully dark, but it certainly engaged my feelings.

Also, during this period, I had had a direct personal experience with the illness — my sister died of cancer — and I didn't feel I had had the chance to work. It was completely, borne in the midst of making a film. I had known that and suggested that if he were willing to make a change with me as a director, as well as a producer, then I would take over the property and go back to the planning board and try to reconstruct the script.

The concept belongs to what might be called a well-known genre, going back to "Dark Victory," if not earlier, and right through to "Love Story." Did you feel you were making a risk, with the box-office and with the critics, by tackling this subject again?

No. My concern was always getting it done. I was doing so many things for the first time, and making it get something made that I myself would be responsible for. It was a totally involving and deeply expensive, and I was always accepted as the most pragmatic level. My concern was "My God, can I make the money?" "Can I cut it in a way that I will really be accepted again?" And I'm going to direct it? It was a terrifying experience and there was no time for any second guessing.

I think there was also a self-preserving instinct. If I had stopped to think about people actually looking at the bloody thing, I might have been overwhelmed. So, I initially put my head in the sand and just went on about the job.

You must have seen a lot of films that deal with the subject. . .

What I did was to consciously avoid seeing films that dealt with the same subject matter. For my source material I went to documentary or educational films — those that had been made by dying patients. They formed the backbone and the support system for the work. Some were very beautiful.

One was made by the friends of a young poet who was dying of leukemia, and it was beautifully done and very moving. Another, made over a very long period, was about a young girl who was an extraordinarily gifted pianist. One watched her through all the stages of her illness, and through to her

death. It involved interviews with the family and was a beautiful film. I had my key crew watch that film with me.

Then there was another which was quite extraordinary. It was several films, really, and was about a young doctor who was an ecologist in the course of his research he had unwittingly poisoned the chemicals that give him cancer of the esophagus. So he had to live with the reality of not only having diagnosed his own illness, but of having probably given himself the disease. It was incredible.

I also tried to expose my actors and crew to materials at hospitals and cancer patients.

The media in America, even before the film's release, seemed to be identifying it as a controversial film, simply because it raises the issue of euthanasia. Do you see that issue as a problem one for the film, or as just one aspect of a broader drama, such as the journey that is implicit in the opening sequence?

Early I would like to address myself first to the question of euthanasia. It is a very broad term and covers a lot of complex issues that I wasn't attempting to deal with in the film. The obvious questions about euthanasia are: Fairness. For whom? Under what circumstances? and by whom? directed? That really wasn't what the film was about. I was dealing with a specific set of circumstances through which I was trying to examine the responsibility of a doctor towards a patient.

That is in a clearly defined period of history, where the doctor's responsibility to the patient's wishes, and the patient's desire for independent choice and autonomy, is in conflict with some abstract medical rules which more and more in the U.S. guarantee that people who are terminally ill, even if it is from old age, are denied the opportunity to choose how they die. They are pushed into institutions and are looked up at as extraordinary and kept alive at tremendous cost and anguish, whether or not that is what they want. Now that's what I was focusing on, not the broad issue of euthanasia.

On the other hand, I also wanted to suggest that living and dying are part of a common experience. I was trying to illustrate that Alexandra, who was cut off and portrayed had her feelings buried in the patient, and that through this experience of journey with Buffy she was able to put her principles back in focus.

By living through this experience, she had to let go of self-pity and depression, and all those things which we tend to lay on ourselves. We don't appreciate how fortunate it is to be alive and well, and to have the opportunity to begin over again repeatedly.

So, I was trying to trace the two kinds of journeys in a state. Alexandra's movement from non-involvement to a full and breathtaking kind of life experience, and Buffy's, having to come to terms with the fact that, like it or not, she has to surrender life and has to do so in a way that will leave her feeling good about herself.

Given that "Promises in the Dark" belongs to a potentially "niche" genre, is it remarkable that you have shared what you have called "very rare"? Do you see this as a possible reason for the commercial failure of the film in the U.S.?

Yes I am sure it is. It is really tough for me to be entirely objective because when a film is rejected for whatever reason it hurts like crazy. But I have heard from so many people who have seen it and who really admire and respect the film, that they had to drag themselves to see it. They just didn't want to look at it and the same they heard about it, and its attempt to deal directly with the subject matter and not sugar-coat it, less they felt inspired to run out and live up in the street.

That last shot of Alexandra and the expression on her face, when she switched off the life-support system, and the fade to black are not only stunning but uplifting. . .

I am glad you felt that. The response of people who have seen the film has been splendid, and has somewhat counteracted my disappointment at it not being more widely received. Those are the odds we take.

It has already been said to be invaluable, so you do have a ready-made audience coming up. . .

Yes and the CBS network felt that the film would attract a much broader audience than the theatrical experience suggested. They felt that at home, with its sense of security and privacy, the feelings the film generates might be easier for people to deal with. There is more of a history of that kind of subject matter on television, although it is not dealt with in quite the way.

One can imagine it working in much the same way as "Scenes from a Marriage," when it was in its original short-run series for television. People sat around afternoons for breakfast and talked to each other about it. . .

I would love nothing more, I really don't care how people use it, or where I have an immense involvement in having people use it, as I am sure you are understood, and where I don't I would like to see the way I conceived it — and a

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JAPANESE CINEMA

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Japanese Cinema is comparable with the best of European and American filmmaking, both in the range and significance of its films and the stature of its directors.

To investigate the film industry and culture at first-hand, director and writer Ian A. Stocks recently visited Japan (with assistance from the Australia Japan Foundation). Here is his report.

The first major response to Japanese film began in the 1930s with Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950), followed by a whole horde of admirers of the work of Kurosawa, Ken Takizawa, and a lesser rank of copies. Unfortunately, interest in Japanese film tends to wane there, neither looking back at the glories of the 1930s nor forward to the optimism of that 'Golden Age', as directors like Nagisa Oshima (in all his work), Shohei Imamura (almost unknown outside Japan), Murobuchi Shiroshi and others. It is rather like looking at a precious stone without having any regard to the setting.

This article, therefore, will attempt to show Japanese cinema in historical and aesthetic context, placing less than usual reliance on films already well-known in the West.

The Beginning

Japanese cinema inherited many debts, and owes a few innovations, from the culture from which it sprang. The society was a rich, dynamic and abundant tradition which made full use of expensive styles and sets, and used dramatic expression based on character development. The novel was not a major form in 20th Century Japan, so film development was accelerated by a reliance on text and plot. Stories for the stage were very rarely based on performance and character.

Another asset was the great method of art work distribution, developed to its highest degree in the Edo period and which provided a useful impetus to film production. The Japanese woodblock print was an art form in itself, which was produced for, and patronized by, a public with highly-developed standards. It showed its power in the depiction of everyday life—in its celebration of the lives and passions of a burgeoning urban society. So for early filmmakers, it was natural for them to take daily life as a subject. Historical movies, expressed in the same effusive colloquialism, drawn from Kabuki theatre plots, also adapted well to film.

Early silent-outdoor films had the theatre reduced the resistance to female actors (only films were made with men-only—male impersonators) and the power of the benshi (the on-stage narrator who explained every detail of the plot and psychology of the Kabuki play). It was quite some time before these limitations were decisively overcome.

At the time social realism started to grow in Japan, other, more positive, forces were taking hold as the society. Expansionist militarism, the

revival of the cult of Bushido ('the way of the warrior') in a darker form, and an almost hysterical desire to prove Japanese equality, if not superiority, to a disadvantaged West, all drew the nation closer to war. Surprisingly, little of this necessarily permeated the cinema.

Even Japanese war documentaries have a detached, almost lyrical quality, as if the makers were amazed by Japanese achievement in this area. Only in the chambers toward the end of later war films do we see this eating edge of the Japanese psyche, the highly-developed martial art and the extreme and almost unthinking violence that is a product of conditioned responses and deflected outrage. And only in the wartime film is the bushido ethic celebrated, re-assured as an integral part of Japanese mind.

Forgotten History

Directors like Yasujiro Ozu, Kenji Mizoguchi, Mikio Naruse, Shiro Toyoda and Hirokazu Gosho dominate the pre- and post-war history of Japanese cinema, but only a few representative films of these directors have been screened for Western audiences. Interestingly, some of these directors were still making films as recently as 1973, one was Toyoda, who began as an assistant in 1925 and made his directorial debut in 1929. *Kobun no Mio* (Twilight Year), which he completed in 1973, is a funny and deeply moving black comedy about an old man who finds himself rejected by his son, as his health and control of his mind and bodily functions start to fail slowly. Only the devotion of his daughter-in-law saves him. Toyoda's style is sympathetic and coherent, with no sign of fading artifice.

Similarly, Kenji Mizoguchi's much more serious filmmaker, but director of *Jigokuken* (Gate of Hell 1953), the color film which marked the entry of Japanese film into the West, started work in 1917 as a female impersonator in film and spent more than 50 years directing film.

Mizoguchi, the undisputed master of the Japanese film, known with great affection as 'the women's director' is a tribute to his gift of bringing believable women characters to the screen and disposing with masculine made his debt. In 1962, four years before his death, he made what many consider his best work, the profound *Saikyoku Ichibu* (one *Life of Oshichi*) which traces the life of a 50 year old prostitute which began with an unhappy love affair.

The film forcefully exposes the subjugation of women in Japan, while presenting the heads of houses quietly set up Oshichi as the right to refuse her son's offer of refuge. Present and considered, the film moves with a dream-like reserve

which serves as a complete encapsulation of life, which, after being lived, is only memories and dreams.

Mizoguchi's films, from the early *Gen* to *Shinai* (Sisters of the Gate, 1936) to the later color epic *Yuki* (Princess Yang Kwei Fei, 1951) and *Shogun's Messenger* (New Tales of the Tama Clan, 1976), present an epic sweep and grandeur equaled only by Kurosawa's in his best. Long sweeping pans, with crowds moving on a field are to the camera, are a Mizoguchi trademark which only catches his dynamic view of human history and emotions.

Certainly, in Noel Burch's points out in his excellent book *To the Director's Observer*, the 1930s and '40s saw the growth in Japan of a truly original national cinema, which, although it absorbed and adopted influences of the West, went far in its analysis of these forms.

The cinema of Ozu and Mizoguchi are well known in Western film circles, and spoken of with some reverence, but little is appreciated of the other great masters: Naruse, Gosho, and Ishido. Many of their films have vanished, but others are gradually being re-discovered.

Eventually, a study of Japanese cinema must bring us closer to a re-evaluation of Western filmmaking. In contrast, alone, Japanese cinema throws up many challenges, its concentration on personality and morality, and its focus on the problems of home and duty, obligation and honor expose many weaknesses in the Western film.

Until recently, few American films had managed an insightful depiction of the home environment. Indeed it was hardly considered a fit subject for film. Instead the American hero is usually a rebel out on his own against the world. Even in the finer works of Italian and French cinema, although penetrating observations are often made, the concern is for the social context rather than the bonds of family.

It is interesting to compare a recent American film *Five Easy Pieces* (1970), directed by Bob Fosse with *Higashino no Yume* (Foghorn Flower, 1958), a late Ozu work.

In *Five Easy Pieces* Robert Dupen (Jack Nicholson) sets off for his family home with a girlfriend, Rayette (Kirsten Black), from an unacceptable background. Robert comes from a musical family and can play well, but has rebelled against his proscribed career and dropped out. Once Robert arrives, the film contrasts on the resistance of the family, which seems to have no common goal. Fellow feelings or mutual obligations—only a mysterious need to be together for a short time. Acceptance is not professed, nor is it encouraged. Arguments break out, the girlfriend is humiliated and Robert adds to the chaos by sleeping with his own sister. Frustration is at best, bewilderment, and the film ends abruptly.

How different is Ozu's treatment of family relationships in *Spring Flower*. The film shows a father's efforts to control a wayward daughter,

Oyashiki and *Chikara* from top left: Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon*, Shiro Toyoda's *Twilight Year*, Kenji Mizoguchi's *Life of Oshichi*, Toyoko Oshima's *Summer of Miquel*, New Tales of the Tama Clan, Toyoko Oshima's *Gate of Hell*.

who has rejected an arranged marriage and runs away with a young engineer. The father calms his friends, who try to temper his rage, but even they melt away, and he is left to face the crisis alone.

He then goes with his long-suffering wife to a seaside resort, but even there peace is impossible: protesting students hold a party one late in the night, and the old couple cannot sleep. Finally his wife convinces him to make the long drive to see his daughter. There, he accepts the situation, and, as the film ends, the father finds some solace singing old army songs with his buddies.

The character in the film is impeccable, the pace slow and considered, and the story convincing. Added to this is Ozu's particular style: an absence of panning and zooming, a selectivity that keeps the camera at all times below the eye-level of the characters, and a fluidity in the movement of scenes and response. The result is the quality of great art. Against such commitment and formalization, most Western films seem overdramatized and chaotic.

Post-war Era I: Impact on the West

Probably the most popular Japanese filmmaker, and the only one to gain complete acceptance in the West, is Akira Kurosawa, who began his career in the 1940s, while the Pacific War was in progress. Before then, his career had been unremarkable, and he now occupies a similar position, unfortunately as that of Sweden's Ingmar Bergman. At best, Kurosawa's films are dynamic, well wrought and usually superb creations of art and place, at worst, they are more spectacle, overblown and pretentious. His early films are probably the best, being more closely related to the roots of Japanese culture.

Rashomon (*Saga 8*) (*Judo Saga 1*) (1950) is a study of Sugawara no Yumoto, a young martial arts student in the Heian era (that of the modernization of Japan under the Emperor Meiji), who finds himself intrigued to die then one act of judo, which was beginning to offer competition to judo. Sugawara, an older teacher who is under attack, finds his own strength, but then has to struggle with his acceptance and desire of victory. Only through the love of a woman — the daughter of one of the opposing jo-shu masters

where he has to defeat in a fight — does Sugawara find his own piece of mind and liberation, acceptance in judo.

Zen concepts and images abound. Sugawara spends one night clinging to a pole in the teacher's garden pending a promise he has made, he is "enlightened" by the opening of a lotus flower in the morning.

Saga 11 — But many of Kurosawa's films — is studio-bound, and only the mastery of black and white composition and texture saves it from claustrophobia.

Two years later, Kurosawa made *Ten no Kage* (*Saga 12*) (*The Man Who Stays in the Tiger's Tail*) (1952), which reflects the situation of wartime Japan. But, like all his films, it shows the acceptance of failure as well as success, and for this reason was quite popular after the war when it was finally released by the American Occupation censors.

As with many Japanese (period films), it has a clear reference to the state of society at the time of production. In particular, it mirrors its periods in Japanese history that all the except of the Lord Yoshitane with his faithful servant Benkei the failed warrior. Benkei leads Yoshitane and his retainers, who are disgraced as guests, as they try to accept parole cut for Yoshitane's blood.

Finally, to get through the last border outpost to freedom, Yoshitane is disgraced at a point. Even so, they determine to fight, and when Benkei sees that the commanding officer is about to attack his lord, he grabs a stick and beats Yoshitane. This is enough to allow the surrender of the soldiers if not for the commanding officer, and Yoshitane is allowed to travel on.

This situation must have had many repercussions to the post-war scene in Japan, when the Emperor, formerly deified as a living God, was forced to demand his people's surrender and to denounce his army. Whether this allegory was ever accepted by the Japanese of this generation is unknown, but the whole scenario was, in fact, in that the Japanese superior system of government was allowed to continue. At least, the Emperor was never tried as a war criminal, as most Western leaders hoped.

In any case, Kurosawa's codebooks were clearly established, and he continued with a great number of films. *Rashomon*, with its immense success overseas, and its supposed Japanese-ness, firmly established him as one of the country's greatest talents. Yet, Kurosawa is far from being a typical Japanese film. As



A Japanese actor, Akira Kurosawa, in a scene from his film *Rashomon*.

Kurosawa's later films increasingly showed, it owes a great debt to the Western, especially to John Ford.

One of Kurosawa's worst is Kurosawa's film of the dynamics of war position and confrontation, the Ford trademark of shooting through a partially-obscured doorway or area, frame-within-a-frame composition, the relative shallowness of the characters and the clear distinction between good and bad characters. Personal choice in a Kurosawa film weighs the individual has a duty, usually in light, and after the battle there is the same Fordian sense of regret.

Kurosawa's career can be seen to have followed a path of success and decline. The apex was *Seven Samurai* (1954), a film of great strength. It was the most expensive film ever made in Japan, a calculated loss of about 1.5 million Yen, but the obscure *Rashomon* (1950) and the lush but topical *Drunken Drunken* (1955) show a sensuality and lack of directional edge that verges on the disarming. Kurosawa is like the boxer who has gone soft, his decline is tragic.

Below left: Akira Kurosawa's film *Seven Samurai*. Below right: Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai*.





Flies on the Plain Ken Ichikawa's stark and raw account of the devastating effects of war

A vastly different proposition is the work of Ken Ichikawa, often regarded as a potential peer to Kurosawa, but to me his superior. Ichikawa's films have a depth of insight which is rare as cinema, whether from East or West. In most of his films, he conveys that essence of the true work of art: the intertwining and suggestion of human frailty and darkness before the survival instinct takes over.

From his earliest days, Ichikawa tackled difficult subjects like the redneck riots and violence at Hiroshima on *Yakusa* (*Hearts of Storms*, 1954) to the desperate, almost sub-human actions of *Nuke* (*Flies on the Plain*, 1959). In a wonder of perspective and a mystery of *nuance* in a zone that is not dependent on camera tricks or fine editing, he shows dramatic genius. More importantly, his films breathe: they are alive on the faces of the masses of rage and pain, sweat and decay. His talent is highlighted in his neglected *Yakusa-jungo* (*An Actor's Revenge*, 1962), where an assassin manages to track down his assassin-killers and avenge their deaths. The performance, by noted western star Keanu Reeves, is brilliant, he suggests the profound depths of the assassin as well as bringing home the desire for blood, all the more shocking in its subtleties.

In a way, the triumph of *An Actor's Revenge* is that it is a film without a subtitle, one is just there in the drama context. Opportunities present themselves and one let go and let the shocking discomfiting, remarkable only because of the pervasiveness of this audience, half-women.

In its mystery, Ichikawa's films resemble the best of Ozu's work, reflecting the essential Japanese tradition of *mono no aware* — of seeing the world for what it is, and living in that world. Whereas Kurosawa uses this ideal for what it is, Ichikawa pursues it through all the tiny nuances of a character's mind, exposing not a dogma, but a spiritual fact.

Like the work of Ozu, Ichikawa's camera remains a discreet reserve, which is not formalistic but rather like the stance of a detached, yet sympathetic observer. Consequently, he gives wicked characters, without artifice or celebration.

Often working with his wife as scriptwriter, Ichikawa's output has been prolific and diverse. In 1958 for example, he made the prodigious *Flies on the Plain*, a bitter study of war and its dehumanizing aspects, based on the novel by Shûei Otsuka. *Kagi* (*The Key*), a bleak comedy on the declining sexual capabilities of an old man,

and two other films of less enduring merit. With the decline of the feature film industry, he was not active in television and directed 26 episodes of *Gump* (*Memories of The Tale of Gump*, 1964).

Ichikawa's most recent film to gain release in the West, *Wanderers* (*The Wanderers*, 1973) is a vibrant attempt to reconnect modern Japan through the eyes of 'youth' characters.

Some would-be samurai travel through Japan trying to make a living, but they lack the style and the skill to carry it off. Along the way they are joined by a half-wild girl who treats them uncaringly but they are unable to support even themselves and the girl is sold off as a prostitute. The hero dies agonically when he falls and breaks his skull.

Despite the attempts to relate this film to modern Japanese youth (the hero is played by a leading pop star) and despite the richness of the youth and its dejected characterization, *The Wanderers* seems like an echo from a lost era, a dejected mixture. Ichikawa said in an interview 'the reason why there are so many *ado-joshi* made in this [Japan]. Film-makers seem somewhat unable to grasp contemporary reality'.

Ichikawa is still making films, but of a particularly Japanese mould and in a style not culminated to new audiences in the West. I was lucky to see him at work when I visited the Tsubo Studio. When I saw his tall, elderly but healthy-looking man in a white cap, standing with a deference between his teeth as he was prepared for another set-up. The technician worked with blinding speed, instantly releasing, lighting and driving the set as one bent. Finally, the shot, a complex dolly through a doorway, was ready and Ichikawa had a look at it. He made a few suggestions, switched through the viewfinder as the camera did short takes, then nod back. It was somehow encouraging to see such a master approaching his work with calm and devotion.

Post-war Era II: Social Criticism

One film to evoke a strong and immediate response as an first shown in Australia was Masaki Kohayashi's three-part *Ningyo no jûken* (*No Greater Love: Road to Eternity, A Soldier's Prayer*, 1979-81), which was screened in a 1978 National Film Theatre season. Despite, or

rather because of, the length, this film drew large audiences who watched with fascination the evolution of the Japanese post-war film.

The hero, Kaji (Tatsuo Naitoh), finds himself working at a large plant in Manchuria which was forced Chinese labor. He attempts to do something to alleviate their conditions, but is drafted into the army. Finally, after the Soviet declaration of war, the Japanese forces are wiped out and the hero finds out the same, still working by his wife.

Ningyo no jûken differs from the war films of Ichikawa, say, in that Kaji is of a more Western mould, he shows individualism and is a frustratingly fine of the accused measures of the soldiers and the grim suppression of feeling. Kaji is emotional about womanly in his desires. He craves at the slightest noxious, and finds it hard to look on at the many atrocities he sees but he never really find what holds him back, unless it is his own stunted imagination about human behaviour becomes a large ground under stress.

Various scenes stand out, such as those of the Japanese on the military police torturing soldiers or executing some laborers. The latter scene shows the degradation of the *husho* after an executioner prepares for serial for hanging heads by setting it (as the film does twice in it) and then hands it over to the local policeman who makes a meal of it. The scene has a poetic quality, yet evokes a very satirical side of the Japanese character.

Kobayashi takes a big risk in exposing his country's war crimes to definitively, especially since that honesty has rarely been seen elsewhere in the West. The film which closely approaches *Ningyo no jûken* is its expose of passions in war in *Gille Postel's Battle of Algeria*, an Italian epic of the Algerian war of independence. If one looks to American films for depictions of war crimes, one can only think of *Little Big Man*, which shows brutality against Indians as historical proof. Of course, this witness also refers to the Vietnam war, expressing in code the shock to the American psyche dealt by the My Lai atrocities. But *Ningyo no jûken* is not in code, and it clearly states the various Japanese attitudes to a bitter war.

Kaji is not a coward, as a trauma out, and in the final battle with Soviet tanks, he and his men fight with great bravery. Later, there is a wonderful scene when Kaji goes through a

Below: Kaji (Tatsuo Naitoh) in a scene from the third episode of *Ningyo no jûken* (The House of Cards)



mountain war crosses trial as he tries to defend himself before the Soviet commission. But he is betrayed by a traitorous interpreter and Kaji, who has spent most of his time anticipating and discussing a possible victory in made out to be a war criminal.

Nagisa Oshima does have his G-men — there is a certain suspicion about the producers, maybe due to accusations in production, maybe just in respect of Oshima's style — but, in the grip of its narrative and the honesty of its statement, it surpasses most other war films.

Kurosawa has made many films a few of which have made their way to the West. *Kasuga* (Oshima, 1964), a series of ghost stories based on the stories of Lafcadio Hearn, used color, the widescreen format and a most original soundtrack to evoke the menses of superstition and fearful acceptance of the supernatural that is integral to Japanese traditional life.

Two other films *Ju-on* (*Requiem* 1967) and *Seppuku* (Hasegawa, 1962), expose the emptiness of Japanese feudalism, the cult of obedience to superiors, and the ability of self-inflicted death (*seppuku*) as a tact radical in style and content, and his films merit close attention.

Post-war Era III: New Wave

As in many instances, the Japanese are not averse to picking up overseas trends. So by 1962, they had now made films in production, most notably early Oshima films. Oshima is a writer in himself, and has been covered widely as a result of sensational films like *L'Empire des sens* (*Empire of the Senses*, 1970), but he has a long history as an filmmaker and his dynamic political concerns have always been to the forefront. Only recently has some of his more moody, considered work become available in Australia.

Most significant is *Natsu no itadaki* (*Dear Summer Sister*, 1972), which was brought to Australia by the Australia Japan Foundation in 1978 and has had a limited number of screenings in 35mm version. On the surface a direct, roughly-made low-budget film, it is, in fact, a strongly unified work which stands to be ranked as one of the great films of the '70s.

The film deals with the question of the status of Okinawa, long a Japanese possession, liberated after bitter battles with the Americans

in the closing stages of the Pacific War and returned to Japan in 1972. In fact, Okinawa was the only part of the Japanese homeland that was ever invaded, and the casual battles there, with consequent fighting to the last man and Japanese civilians committing suicide in mass, by jumps off the cliffs into the sea, earned it a special place in Japanese history.

The exploration of this subject, which brings to the fore the differences in cultural tradition between the two areas (Okinawa is a mainly rural, Japanese, largely a patriarchy), is explored through the story of Saeko, a young Japanese girl who travels with her aunt to Okinawa to try, and certainly her last full brother. She meets her uncle through a series of events as a second brother at the airport, offering lessons in Okinawan but does not recognize her. Other characters make an appearance such as Saeko's, an ex-soldier who travels to the island to relieve the violence and excitement of the war, and who also hopes for a meeting with the girl who will kill him.

Through a carefully use of the landscape of the island, Oshima weaves a story that is a political drama in the broadest sense, even down to his specific references to Japanese history and its expression through character. The delicate use of harsh lighting, the music and the treatment of the ideas original and to, rather than direct force, the film's message.

Another filmmaker who has fought for national concerns as a fit subject for film is Shohei Imamura, who is a writer first. Oshima's other epic Imamura's first film to gain attention in the West was *Kuroguma monogatari* (*The Porcupine*, 1968), a bitter social study of some men who make their poor film for a living. Shot in black and white, it breaks with many of the formal elements of Japanese film, taking a much more mainstream storyline and expressing the growing self-awareness of Japanese youth.

Imamura's work has been steady and prolific up to the mid-1970s, but his major work which has been almost unseen in the West, except for short sections in Germany, is *Kuroguma* (*Tales from a Southern Island*, 1968). This massive, often targeted but visually and artistically superb film is Imamura's high point as a director.

Kuroguma is certainly a study of myth and

Below: a scene from *Dear Summer Sister* by the *Penelope* project.



Nagisa Oshima's *Dear Summer Sister*, which explores the differing cultural traditions of Okinawa and Japan.

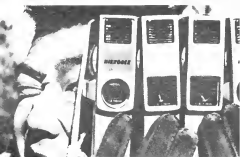
society, with a kinship system based on old principles and practices that date almost to prehistoric times, embracing readiness, discipline and sexual ritual. The reality is torn away by the arrival of a 'New Japanese', Kanya, a water engineer concerned with development of the sea island. But in his contact with the situation and their primitive culture he quickly degenerates into a case several states.

Imamura, although his film is set in the southern islands, makes a subtle statement about Japan itself, pointing out how traditional traditions create a society dependent on ritual that is the enemy of culture and reason. Not that Imamura says that these new imports are good, in fact, the whole film has a sexual quality as the ritual is dragged towards 'progress'. Rather, at the best tradition of what an aware, Imamura says the problem and the solution is based on dramatic irony, and the whole process advances regardless.

Kuroguma is a massive film, in scope and production, but was not a financial success, and it is hardly surprising that the Nikkatsu studio (which was forced out of such art film production within a couple of years) Imamura has returned from active feature production, and now runs a private film school in Yokohama. His other work includes a number of documentaries for television, dealing with the search for Jan Jansen in the Pacific.

Lastly, it is what appears to be the undervalued films of the Japanese New Wave, at the same industry work of Masaharu Shinoda, a young director who made his debut in 1962 with youth films for Shochiku. An art graduate, his brilliant exploration of film is best seen in *Shikoku* but no surprise (*Double Suicide*, 1969), a film review of the classic Bunraku play *Double Suicide* at Amagasaki. Instead of merely documenting the play and illustrating a two film series, Shinoda has explored the character of film and play, integrating elements of theatre and graphic design to create an experience of great wonder.

When watching *Kuboku* during the Winter festival is often usually decorated by using the *Shikoku* (black) members dressed in black) appear during the festival to help act as a change of costume on stage, or hand out an essential prop. Eventually, in the conclusion of Japanese theatre, these *kyōkei* reveal a terrible. But in the film version of the play, Shinoda has retained the *kyōkei* so that at crucial moments the action is helped along, even created by, these





Top right: The lovers, Kobayashi and Mitsuo, in *Mitsuo Shindō's* *Shinshi Shōshi*. Top left: *Shindō's* story of a love story, *Maido in Goryō*.

hooded figures (anonymous but menacing). Once again, the incorporation of traditional Japanese is a new context infuses a powerful statement on the status of Japanese culture.

The plot of *Shinshi Shōshi* deals with the persistence of pine against the social codes. Here, a paper merchant, falls in love with the geisha Kobayashi, but as his business suffers he is unable to buy her out. His brother tries to break the relationship by disguising himself as a lover of Kobayashi's, and they even get him to sign in high ink so he can use her name, but, finally, their wife insists that Kobayashi is not faithful to him, and insists that she sell or marry off their love, including her dowry. In love Kobayashi and therefore she has her honor. But the wife's father arrives and strips her honor.

Then, through a series of tricks, each humiliating to Kobayashi, she now lives alone and across a series of bridges, each stop taking them closer to suicide. Helped by the local karate, Kobayashi, who then hangs himself. Their downfall is inevitable, the final confrontation with a united society from which escape was not possible.

The art direction succeeds brilliantly in "modernizing" the settings, using huge blow-ups of prints and designs, so that it is clear from the beginning that the world they occupy is a personal physical one. *Shindō's* mastery of the pictorial elements, and his always precise angles and composition, are apt without appearing tricky.

Hanami goro uta (*Maido in Goryō*, 1977), a more recent film by *Shindō* entered for the 1978 Asian Film Festival, is a more conventional approach to its story. But it is still exceptional for its close progression and nature of character. It tells of a blind woman singer who makes her living by playing in villages throughout pre-war Japan. *Shindō's* film is a very highly developed sense of place and a fine eye for human emotion.

Sadly, the Japanese New Wave is in decline. *Imamura* has made only one film since the early 1970s. *Shindō* is still directing, but on a reduced scale, and *Oshima* is reliant principally on European money for his productions. Like cinema in most countries, the economics of production can no longer be covered after the cost of distribution is deducted from over demanding returns.

Total film admissions in 1977 were 1,086,82,000 — i.e., 18 admissions per head of population — but had already dropped a drastic

20 per cent by 1981. The decline has been steady and irreversible as other priorities drain the leisure spending of the population. And, in Japan has a figure of 128 television sets per 1000 people, the figure continues to look bleak.

Unfortunately, as the audience declines so does the number of documentaries being made, so apart from a few local efforts at large-scale production it is the international blockbusters which secure the market, and local productions

and yakuza films (gangster films) are left to pack up the left-overs. These are, sadly, just as disappointing as their foreign counterparts. Still, they do allow a glimpse for young actors and directors to enter the industry, and the occasional one does have some interest. *Nikkatsu's* "sensuous plays" series, made to reasonable standards at budgets of \$10,000 and so, have shown some promise and partly the assurance by their release on to the growing video market to attract. They

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Company Structure

As in most Japanese business, the film production industry is dominated by a few large companies. In comparison with the U.S. however, there is one significant difference: there is no anti-trust legislation in Japan, so every element of production is owned and under one umbrella — from the labs to the cinema, from the talent agencies to the taking, printing, releases.

Thus, for example, the largest company in Japanese film, operates 234 theatres throughout the country. In one area in Tokyo, *Yamashita*, just across from the Imperial Palace, Toho operates 30 top-class film theatres and six huge libraries. It has a vast studio complex out of town, with many sound stages, its own labs and sound department, plus a huge special effects unit. It makes television programs, runs 92 restaurants, deals in property, runs entertainment centres, and also manufactures and releases records. In addition, it owns and operates golf courses, tennis courts, dance halls and wine bars.

This is the company responsible for most of *Kurosawa's* output. For many of the films of *Ozu*, *Nanase*, *Mitsuo*, and others. Other major Japanese companies include *Fuji* (founded 1941), *Nikkatsu* (since 1912, the oldest film company in Japan), *Shochiku* (1933) which was founded as an adjunct to theatre production, and *Toei* (1951), as well as many breakaway and derivative, and so on (see endnotes for details).

Each major togetherness was based on a particular style, aimed at a certain section of the vast Japanese audience of the '30s and the '40s. For example, *Nikkatsu* has specialized in dramatic, lower class life. *Shochiku* focused on "Auricular" style, with a slightly left bias. *Toei* the "pink-girl" (pin-up) film and serious drama, but even this usage did not spare some from disaster. *Toei* was crippled by labor strikes just after World War 2, and took a long time to recover. A breakaway studio, *Shin Toei* (New Toei), produced one of *Nikkatsu's* early films. *Nikkatsu* got into serious financial trouble in the late '60s and had to cease production, and has only recently got back into limited production with its range of "sensuous pornography" films — *Sally* could see cinema in jeopardy.

A visit to *Toei Studios* revealed one of one of the large British studios like Pinewood, a large sprawling lot, with big sound stages built inside a world long-type structure. Outside was the debris of past productions. Large plants, disassembled sets and just plain garbage. It was messy, and the whole place was quiet, but work was going on in the large and lively sound building, and over on a back stage *Shochiku* was directing a specialized local film.

I found the studio less detailed than a British one, the security quite lax and the stages set quite soundproof. However, production seemed faster and the crews worked far more cohesively than on British sets.

Elsewhere the stages were dark, used for storing goods or unrelated props. A cold wind swept across the dark studio lot, the huge special effects tank was empty and pointed off the main protection wall behind it.

In the editing department, *Kurosawa's* room was just as he had left it, with the sunlights that he used to cut his great films, a board, shrouded with units to hang film on, a hallway viewer and a pair of scissors. It was hard to believe that such monumental works were produced with such minimal means. But nearly 30 years have passed, and so have the great days of cinema.

Malcolm Smith

Malcolm Smith, director of the Tasmanian Film Corporation, talks to Peter Beilby and Scott Murray about the TFC's establishment, and the role it is playing in film production in the state.

Tasmania was the first state to get into the film business. Norman Lindsay, a film producer, was so inspired by the work of John Grierson, whom he had met in New Zealand, that in 1946 he set up the Lumsda Department into setting up a small film division.

This division underwent several changes, becoming a department in the 1960s. By 1971, it had a staff of 39, all employed under the Public Service Act, and including people in the microfilm and still photographic areas. Unfortunately, the bureaucracy and the structure overtook the filmmaking capacity.

Whose initiative was it to reconstitute the situation?

Bill Nielsen, who was the Labor Premier at the time, had sent a team across to have a look at the South Australian Film Corporation in 1973. He was sufficiently impressed that there were other ways of doing things within a bureaucratic structure, and got Ol Stanley, the former director-general of the SAFC, to do a report into the department of film production. The Government acted very quickly in this regard and the Tasmanian Film Corporation was established on September 5, 1977.

What was your first priority as director of the TFC?

To ensure that my creative staff were not employed as public servants. That was the worst battle we fought and won. If we had not, had the right to hire and fire, then it might as well have been kept as a government department.

Do you think public servant requirements have hindered the other state government film bodies?

Absolutely. You can see it in the Peter Marwick and Mitchell report on the Australian Film Commission, which recommended the AFC move away from the public service structure. This is one of the things holding Film Australia back. It is dragging the AFC down, and has had a harmful effect on the whole of Australia — in government life and not only on the film industry.

Why is it so harmful?

If you have a job and are totally secure at it, there is no reason for you to work harder or faster. There is no need to continually prove yourself. In the past I have worked within government services. I have met a lot of hard-working people. But in general, there is no incentive. The structure has a cushioning and deadening effect.

Some corporations even claim to be hamstrung by regulations over salaries, so that they cannot employ the best people because of salary restrictions.

I believe that has been the case with the Victorian Film Corporation, and I understand they are trying to change it.

Apart from staff levels, what problems did you have in getting the TFC off the ground?

We have always been on a different situation to that of the other corporations, in that we are not a merchant bank. Each year we have a guarantee of income to make government films, but we have to make other things that we have to borrow money to buy

equipment or to invest in the high risk system of feature films, children's television series, or whatever.

In 1975/76, we borrowed \$1 million, \$300,000 worth of that has come from loan funds. The other \$700,000 has come from traditional sources such as banks. So, we have to pay back interest and make capital repayments. That makes us look at our money very carefully.

The TFC has always tried to be self-sustained. We have large overdrafts and have always said that it is going to be a long time before the TFC starts making profits. In fact, the only way is present that we can see ourselves making a profit is if we hit the jackpot with feature films.

Apart from staff, what were your other priorities?

My prime concern was to get the place running as an exciting film production house. That meant changing attitudes, making better films, improving people's skills and finding a good enough team to make those films. My second objective was to boost the TFC's fortunes. It had been in terrible financial straits, which had a very bad effect on morale and

output. Now we have an international standard studio containing first office rooms, a sound stage, a video center, two viewing theaters, a sound mixing suite, photographic darkroom and a portrait studio.

To what extent were you bound to employ local people?

My philosophy has always been to employ local people wherever possible, but I have also recognized that not all the skills are available in Tasmania. In those cases I have tried to bring in people who not only have skills, but are very good at passing on their skills to others. In some cases we have also got our people overseas to gain experience.

What skills was Tasmania lacking?

As far as the old Film Department, film, scriptwriting, producing and sound. The only area that we were really strong in was cinematography. All the other areas needed upgrading.

Was there much filmmaking activity in Tasmania besides that generated by the Department of Film Production?

Very little apart from the ABC and the two commercial television stations. Alanus Matheson, who was Impulse Films, a Hobart production company, made commercials and the occasional documentary.

Tasmania is a very small market, with only 400,000 people. Apart from the television stations, who also make their own commercials, using television crews, we were the only game in town. What has since happened is that several cameramen and producers have left the TFC and set up their own businesses, making documentaries and commercials, or acting as freelance cameramen. What we are starting to see is the emergence of peripheral supports for an industry. Someone has to shoot, for example, set up the first editing agency in Tasmania.

Did you give on this sort of expansion?

Yes, I believe very much in the growth of an industry in Tasmania, and I don't want the TFC to be a bureaucratic structure that controls everything. So wherever we can, we use freelance people.

As the TFC is not given a set budget a year, how does it finance a film for a government department?

In Tasmania, as in South Australia, there is central funding each year; the state government, through the Premier's Department, sets aside an amount for film and still photographic film (this year it is \$668,000). In January every year, the government departments are asked what films they want made during that year. Then, since the 50 or so requests for films have come in, a government film committee decides which departments will have films made in a priority order. Then we make the films until the money runs out.

Apart from state government departments, there are the government instrumentalities, like the Hydro Electric Commission. These bodies, which receive funds outside of the Treasury, are compelled under the Act to come to the TFC to have their films made, or their still photographs taken. But they have to fund these projects out of their budgets.

Do you get any money from the state government to pay for rent or wages?

No. We don't get any subsidy to cover these things.

Which makes the TFC different from the other corporations...

Yes. The only thing we received was a grant of \$58,000 to cover our first year's deficit. That was because we didn't receive any establishment grants, which was one of the things recommended in the Brinkley Report.

The TFC has also made documentaries for commercial companies in Tasmania and interstate. How successful has this been?

Moderately, but I hope



increasingly so. When I did the same sort of films in South Australia, I found it took three years for the SAFC to draw in major sponsors like General Motors-Holden and Mayne Neill Ltd.

I am following the same pattern here and going to companies saying that we can make films effectively and economically in Tasmania, and that they should consider us as their production house. We also have a marketing organisation and can distribute films to the markets they want to reach.

Who should a state film corporation want to move into the public sector and compete with private production companies?

There are many major industrial companies in Australia that do not make documentary films. If we can educate them to recognise the value of documentary films, then we are helping the industry, because we are bringing in more money and introducing new sponsors. And, if I get a film to make for Unilever's Pet Care, that means a lot of local freelance technicians are employed. From an overall Australian standpoint, we are widening our market.

Do you budget these sort of films as an independent product or company work?

Yes, we have total costing. We budget for wages, equipment, raw stock, overhead and profit.

Is there any difference in the way you would estimate costs for a documentary to be produced for a government department and one for a commercial company?

Yes. We apply a larger overhead cost to government films. The philosophy behind that is that the Government has asked the TFC to be here to obtain a certain number of staff and to maintain certain facilities. We consider it right and proper therefore that they bear a greater overhead charge.

Is there sufficient profit in documentaries to make them a viable operation?

We will always be struggling. Our main hope is feature films. We are not going to move into a viable situation for quite some time, given our position in the video, the size and all the problems entailed with that. But we are trying to be profitable at all we do. The one

positive factor is that the money we earn is recyclable; it doesn't go back to the Treasury.

The TFC set up a special marketing office in Sydney to handle your documentaries, how successful has that been?

Very. I have always felt that the marketing and selling of short films in Australia is a neglected area. Feature films are the principal area and the one that takes up a lot of money. Short films always fall into the shadow.

We felt it was important that the marketing office be established in Sydney because it is one of the centres of filmmaking and there are a lot of major clients there.

The marketing office enables the films we make and the clients we handle to be aggressively sold. We are acting as the exclusive agent for the New South Wales Film Corporation, the Western Film Corporation, the Perth Institute of Film and Television, the Australian Council and several independent film producers, like Paul Winkler. The office also keeps back information to let us to what films need to be made.

You also represent the films of Film Australia...

Yes, but not exclusively. We handle only some of their product.

Apparently, the TFC has funded film made outside Tasmania, such as "Freddie"...

When I saw the film, which stars an Australian comedian (I don't want to say his name because he is a film star), I was very much impressed. So the TFC gave Dave Bradbury a loan to help him meet certain shortages. Basically, we will look at anything if it is presented as an exciting and viable proposition.

One of the stated aims of the SAFC was to make itself redundant within five to 10 years. Is that something you hope to do with the TFC?

I would like to see the TFC self-destruct in 10 or 15 years, and the emergence of a private industry based in Tasmania. In practice,

terms, however, it is likely that the TFC will need to be around much longer, even if it is being safely in the role of a catalyst, securing money and investments, and getting documentary films made.

I would like to move more towards the South Australian situation of being able to get work out to the local industry. But we have had different problems, which have meant a concentration on being our own production house and we will need the support of the government for quite some time.

Over the past two years, we have made a major investment in our own broadcast-quality video equipment. We now have a fully operational, small but sophisticated video operation based on Ampex VPRs and Philips VDK14 cameras.

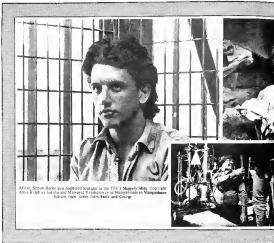
We are producing some of our sponsored documentaries on tape, as well as television programs and commercials. Now we also hope to concentrate on building a varied selection of software material for the home video disc revolution which I see on the horizon. We believe that the book publishing business, as such, will be moving into the video film area and people will be mixing discs and such programs into their homes.

The reason we are exploring in this area is that we believe a state like Tasmania should concentrate on cottage-based industries. Each state has its own particular problems and in Tasmania, we see the need to work in the area of children's television, for which there is a great demand in Australia.

We are trying to recruit the television networks to a children's series (Fairy and George), for which we have already made a pilot.

The Australian industry tends to focus on the feature film, which is the high risk area, whereas we act as a frame for ourselves as producers of television programs, which is a much safer market once you find the product and can attract the television stations to it. Also, once you get a series going, you can produce a continuity of work for crews and actors. A feature is a one-off affair, and the crew disperses after six weeks.

We feel that we shouldn't do



Above: Simon Burke as a neglected teenager in the TFC's *Maggie Miles*. Top right: Alice Knight in *Islands* and Margaret Tindalbury in *Manganinnie*. Bottom right: scenes from *Fairy and George*.

more than one feature film a year, two at most, and that the other area should be the more stable growth area.

Why do you think Tasmania can service the needs for children's programs? Is that an area in which you have special expertise?

We don't have special expertise but we called for *Fairy and George* as required by the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal's children's committee as the best local children's program they have seen. We entrepreneurialized the idea, wrote the script, produced it and hope to go into production in July 1988.

What other children's areas are you looking into?

We have just completed another pilot for *Fairy and George* based on puppets called *The Joe Ninko Show*.

I think Tasmania can develop the puppet and animation areas, although they need specific skills. Given our weather problem, they would use a studio-based, cottage industry type of production.

Is that why you are dealing with animator Yoram Gross?

These were our reasons for dealing with Yoram Gross when the TFC was set up. Recently, however, we bought his option on a property developed by Yoram called *Dear the Lady*, but I did this because I thought it was one of the best family feature scripts I had read in the past two years.

Yoram Gross was actually the first producer I approached over *Manganinnie*, because it looked as though the elements just themselves to an animated film. It is quite interesting that *Manganinnie* has turned out to be live-action, and that we have overcome those elements.

Manganinnie

Manganinnie was initiated because I was very excited when I read the established manuscript by Bob Roberts. It seemed to have the makings of a wonderful film. I believe, as the old Hollywood tradition has it, that film-making is about gut feelings: i.e., hoping that whatever pleases you will also please an audience.

When I showed the idea to the TFC board and a diverse group of people, everyone felt the same

emotional strength in the property. That gave me the confidence to push on and develop it.

What type of film did you see it as during those early stages?

I have always seen it as an exciting and positive film about the dignity of human relationships — very much the *Swann* style aesthetic. I have always hoped that the film would have the quality and values of *Swann* films.

How did you find the manuscript?

The author came to us. The Australian Council had given her a grant to develop the manuscript into a screenplay, and she had hired Ted Ogden to do it. As so much of the book is about the Aboriginal, Manganinnie, Ted decided to tell the story from many viewpoints — the bushranger's, the soldiers', that of the family involved — and only now and again did the Aboriginal women appear. But it seemed to me that the only way one could get the strength of that story across was to tell it from the viewpoint of the two boys, Manganinnie and Jo Jo. So we went back to the original and developed it from there.



Above: *Mangamala*. Below: the new TFC headquarters in Hobart. Screen left: the movie trailer (left) and a still shot



As the Aboriginal woman speaks only a little English in the film, communication is largely through gesture. Is this something that worried you from a commercial viewpoint?

Initially. But the big rule was whether we would find the right Aboriginal and the right girl, and whether there would be enough plot to hold the film together. All I can say after seeing three-quarters of the rushes in film is we convinced we have a classical film which will excite audiences.

Were there problems as obvious in the fund-raising?

I always felt it would be hard to raise finance for *Mangamala* because it could not easily be idealised as a commercial project. It would be like the SAFC going out to sell *Stones* Bay. They had many knock-backs, but they believed in the film, and eventually it was made and turned into an Australian success.

Where we were very lucky was that the first person we took *Mangamala* to was David Williams of Greater Union. We had already been dealing with the AFC, and it was very much behind the project.

But Williams was immediately sold on it, as was John Read and GUD came in with a major investment. I then found it relatively easy to get the local television stations, Channel 6 and Channel 8, and Tasmanian Drive-In Theatres Holdings to invest in the first Tasmanian production.

We did that without any financial tricks, without leverage or anything, because people believed in the product. It was a question of the property selling itself.

How did the project develop?

I gave the project to John Honey, who is a staff producer to me through and through. We also employed Ken Kinko, who was in his third year at the Australian Film and Television School, to write the property. Cal Brookes was also involved in the original writing with Ken and John.

Was Honey always going to direct?

No, we hoped he would be the producer. But John proved himself to be such a fine director on the short films he made for us, that we decided to go with him. That's when we brought in Gaille Bernatchi as producer.

We knew of the reputation she had during her two years in the U.S., and also considered her to be intelligent and sympathetic.

Did you have any reasons from the investors over using so many first-time-out people, like Bernatchi and Honey?

Yes. In fact, we originally wanted a Tasmanian commitment, but the investors feared that we got more people with famous experience. That's why Bernatchi is acting as an executive producer and why Garry Houston is director of photography.

"Mangamala" has a low budget for a film primarily shot on location. Has it been noted as you would a documentary?

No, as a commercial venture. We had some overheads counted to for the TFC, but that is normal commercial practice. When you have cameras, your budget has to be absolutely tighter. It is a tight budget, but it has proved to be a fairly spot-on one.

Your above-the-line costs are probably a lot lower than they would be on most features. Did you estimate

trying to get a few more actors?

We did try to get an international name to play Aina's father, in the hope it would get us a sale in the U.S. The role would take a week to shoot, so we allowed \$50,000. We were looking at Aina Homa, and that type of person, but we found we couldn't afford her. And the sort of money we were getting for \$50,000, I haven't even heard of.

So we decided to go with an Australian. This meant we didn't have to pay all the equity lending and so on. As it is, we are delighted with Philip Hinton.

The title has undergone a few changes. Is there a restoration about the commercial appeal of *"Mangamala"* as a title?

The investors had reservations on whether *Mangamala* would be a strong marketing name, despite Tasmanian. What does a name? Can people spell it? For that reason, we looked for a name that would describe the film better and draw in the male-adult audience. The title we came up with was *Darkening Plains*. But it was not well received and the investors made the decision to go back to *Mangamala*. It could be the *Mangamala* does not work outside Australia and we may have to look for a more change.

When will you have a release print?

In April or May, we are looking for a release in July.

Are you taking the film to the Cannes Film Festival?

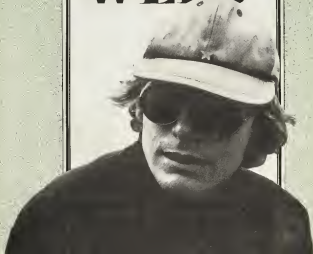
We don't know, but we are certainly not going to rush the film to Cannes. We will get a ready-made, best-suits the film. However, we would do what Tony Gamble has done and take a 25-minute show reel there.

What other features does the TFC have in preparation?

There is *Glend Time*, which is a comedy set in a network. I saw it as a sort of episodic comedy of

In this first of an occasional
series of monographs
on Australian directors,
Brian McFarlane explores
the themes and
preoccupations in

**The films of
PETER
WEIR**







"I am appalled by the threat and danger of life."

Ivy Compton-Burnett, *A Family and a Fortune*

"I think there are signs that strange things happen, though they do not always emerge"

Ivy Compton-Burnett, "A Conversation"¹²

At first glance, there may seem little basis for comparison between the work of Peter Weir and that of Ivy Compton-Burnett; between, that is, arguably the liveliest young filmmaker in 1970s Australia and the great English novelist who died at 85 in 1969, and who produced a grimly witty novel of family life biennially for more than 40 years. And whereas Dame Ivy set her tales of the vicious power struggle and horror that lie beneath the surfaces of everyday life in an almost unvarying English country house, Weir has ranged more widely in locating the alarming disturbances at work at the edges of the supposedly normal.

What these two artists, separated by two generations and working in different media, share is a sharp and witty perception of the disparity that so often exists between the way things seem and the way they are. They are both aware that the area of disparity is frequently maintained at the cost of suppressions and corruptions of the truth, and at the subduing of aspects of the self in the interests of preserving a manageable mundaneness. Further, they both respond alertly to "the threat and danger" that so often seem about to overturn the respectable, the acceptably corrupt; in a word, to the forces that are there in men and women, and which a shift in circumstances may bring to light in alarming ways.

Perhaps even more alarming is the apprehension they share that "strange things happen though they do not always emerge". A criminal intention, or indeed act, may be at work in subterranean ways in a Compton-Burnett novel without being brought to public notice and without punishment. A party of schoolgirls disappears at Hanging Rock and the result is mystifying, rather than tragic; life and time and space simply close over them, offering no answers.

In an earlier article I wrote of Weir's "belief

1. "A Conversation Between I. Compton-Burnett and M. Jourdain", *Oxon. A Miscellany* (London, 1945), reprinted in Charles Burnett's *The Art of Ivy Compton-Burnett* (London, Gollancz, 1972, p. 28).



Traveling to Horseshoe Hasting Lodge. Ken Fitzpatrick, James Laer, Doreen Warburton and Barry Kennedy. **Horseshoe**

that horrifying things exist from which there may be no easy escape¹². This is true of the vision of both these artists, and it is true partly because these "horrifying things" are rooted in the darkest possibilities of human nature. In Weir's case — and this is where I shall leave the introductory comparison — he goes, as Ivy Compton-Burnett does not, beyond the possibilities of human nature to contemplation of the irrational and of the supernatural.

This may seem a roundabout way of introducing the director who, now that the most exciting decade of Australian filmmaking is nearly finished, has emerged as the nearest approach to a genuine auteur. He is an artist whose personal stamp is on all he does, and this makes him worth talking about in comparison with other distinguished artists. If none of his films to date is a wholly achieved work, they are all clearly the work of the same man, and that man is not merely a competent craftsman but an artist with a vision and a growing understanding of how this vision may be realized in terms of film.

Peter Weir has come into commercial filmmaking via a series of experimental short films (including some for the Commonwealth Film Unit), beginning in 1967 with *Count Vim's Last Exercise*. Richard Brennan, in an article in *Cinema Papers*,¹³ recalls the reception received by Weir's 1969 film *Michael*, part of a trilogy on the theme of youth, *Three to Go*. Weir's *Michael* "was, like it or not, the embodiment in people's minds of the series and of the great leap forward which the Unit

was taking". A decade later, *Michael* looks like a simplistic examination of youthful rebellion and an equally simplistic repudiation of its values, as the eponymous hero breaks in turn with his middle-class family and his new hippie friends. There are touches of wit in its treatment of the media's role in the late '60s scene (young people in the street are told to "look aggressive ... but above all be yourself" for the television cameras), but its technique, which must have looked lively and inventive then, now seems gratuitously flashy. One sees why Brennan, while acknowledging Weir's "tremendous surface flair", still "had nagging doubts on whether he could discipline and channel the prodigious talents".

Weir's major films of the '70s — *The Cars That Ate Paris* (1974), *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), *The Last Wave* (1977), and the tele-feature *The Plumber* (1979) — suggest that he could. "Prodigious" is an extravagant word perhaps, but there is still plenty of time for Weir to persuade us that it is justified and enough evidence for a hopeful prognostication.



¹² *The New Australian Cinema*, Nelson/Cinema Papers, 1980, p. 64.

¹³ "Peter Weir Profile", *Cinema Papers*, No. 1, p. 16.

Before *Cars*, Weir's first film to achieve major commercial release and his first feature, the film for which he is best known is *Homesdale* (1971), which has had intermittent screenings through the decade. It is interesting chiefly for the ways in which it foreshadows the achievements of the three films that followed. Like them, its view of life is dark, apprehensive, often ironic and shot through with the grim wit that gives a distinctive flavor to *Cars* and *The Plumber* particularly, but is still present in *Picnic* and *The Last Wave*. Like them, too, it is concerned with observing people in potentially dangerous situations that grow partly out of their own personalities and partly out of unpredictably and undefinably threatening influence.

The mild Mr Malfrey pre-figures Arthur Waldo, the protagonist of *Cars*, in his being caught up in and by an oppressive environ-

ment, though Malfrey's passivity in the end proves more complete than Arthur's. In other ways, he also anticipates Michael Fitzhubert in *Picnic*, David Burton in *The Last Wave* and Jill Cowper in *The Plumber*, three people whose apparently bland observership of life is called to account by matters beyond rational control. *Homesdale*, in common with all these later films — though it is much cruder in execution — establishes a firm sense of place, of settings enigmatic and incipiently menacing to the characters picking their way through them.



The manager of *Homesdale* (James Delli), left, with an associate (Kevin) *Homesdale*

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Homesdale Hunting Lodge, "a new experiment in togetherness", appears to be an island retreat, with the outer appearance of a blandly white guest house, presided over by an unctuously toothy manager (James Delli) and various white-coated attendants (wardens?). Following the jolly singing of *We are the Boys of Homesdale* on the soundtrack, the camera cuts to the impassive faces of the guests arriving by ferry, the timid newcomer Malfrey (Geoff Malone) dominated in close-up by Kevin (Grahame Bond), part-time butcher, part-time pop star. *Homesdale* offers its somewhat esoterically chosen guests an opportunity to indulge their private fantasies chiefly by means of a treasure hunt and a revue under the rigorous eye of the manager who frowns on relationships between guests ("I don't like couples here"), presumably because they offer a threat to his authority.

Weir's black comedy is there in the total concept (Malfrey turns murderer and is taken on as a staff member) though its execution falters, sometimes through slack pacing, sometimes through undue spelling out of intentions. Generally it works best in its parodying of



therapeutic treatments: in the guests' costume changes as they act out other aspects of themselves, in the manager's ways of keeping the guests in place ("more of a visual joke, I suppose", he adds when someone's story falls flat; "very similar really, killing an animal and killing an audience", he reflects to Kevin); in the guests' placing of little personal touches in their dreary rooms, and best of all in the "service" before the treasure hunt begins.

The manager exhorts them to pray for "courage, strength and fortitude — and for those who have gone before", before sending them "off into the bush — the great bush of life, with individual maps leading to individual treasures." Having earlier promised them that "Homesdale will help you; help you to face the truth" and making this sound like a source of terror, the manager sends them off on the hunt in which nature is imbued with a sense of threat and danger.

Malfrey, caught in a trap and suspended over a river, is dealt with severely by the manager: "I don't want to have to cane you ... but you're just not pulling your weight. You were smoking on the treasure hunt. What am I to write in your report? ... Lack of teammanship? The odd one out?" Weir satirizes here, without making them less unsettling, the oppressive forces that are at work endemically in his films, and Malfrey's submission is reinforced in a clever overhead shot as he mounts the stairs to his room.

The revue sequence is less surely handled, in timing and parodic intention. Malfrey, taunted by the manager to "do your worst", tries to sing *Nymphs and Shepherds*, is then set upon by

the other guests (angled cameras somewhat obviously creating chaos), and is upbraided by the manager for his subversiveness. There is a proper sense of shock at the revelation that Kevin has been decapitated, but it hardly lives up to the promise excited by the film's early homage to the *Psycho* shower scene.

At the time of making *Homesdale*, Weir still had a good deal to learn about creating a moment of horror, but he was already clearly interested in the imminence of "threat and danger" in human lives, whether timid like Malfrey's or brash like Kevin's.

To come to *Homesdale*, as I did, after seeing the three commercially-released films, is to feel oneself in the presence of a gifted amateur with more ideas and more dark jokes and insights than he can properly organize. But the talent is already indisputable. Weir is not concerned here with straightforward realism (though later films show he is able to achieve this), but with the cinema's capacity for teasing reality out of the play of fantastic notions. He already knows a good deal about how to use the camera to create a horrifying moment or a grim joke, and it is clear how his background in experimental filmmaking will make itself felt in the more formal demands of the full-length feature.

Homesdale was a sign of things to come, and those who admired its nerve — and verve — in 1971 must have felt vindicated by the imaginative confidence which Weir brought to his subsequent films.

The Cars That Ate Paris, Weir's darkest film, is a less ambitious project than *Picnic* or *The Last Wave*: it is essentially a single black joke, and it is not interested in the kinds of metaphysical territory ventured upon in the two later films. But if it is less ambitious, it is also more coherent and its narrative grasp is surer within the limits of Arthur Waldo's experience of Paris, the repulsive little town that lives off motor accidents, that is, on the leavings of a materialistic society. Nevertheless, its theme is still, at least in part, the central insecurity and unsafety of life.

Paris, seen from above, seems to nestle cosily and serenely among green hills, but it is, as Arthur learns, viciously corrupt at every level and virtually a death-trap for those who try to enter or leave it. It can be compared with *Picnic*'s solidly Victorian upper-class girls' school which is much less decorous than it appears, and which disintegrates as the results of the ill-fated picnic become known, or with David Burton's apparently secure middle-class



Kevin (Graham Bond) reacts to a tender Miss Greenstock (Kate Fitzpatrick) *Homesdale*



The Mayor (John McEldowney), backed up by a local, takes a tough stance against the out-mad town youths. *The Cars That Ate Paris*.

home in suburban, professional Sydney in *The Last Wave*, a bulwark which proves quite inadequate to the strains placed on it.

In all these films, the ordinary grasp on life that seems to sustain the protagonists is thrown into psychic and emotional disorder. If this is least subtly done in the case of *Waldo*, it is also done in a way which is dramatically satisfying at the time, so that certain holes in the script are not apparent until later: *Cars* is satisfying because it integrates its elements — its narrative swiftness, its sharp observation of faces and places, its awareness that apparent ordinariness barely masks violence and terror — so as to make us privy to the horror which is at the heart of Weir's vision.

When Arthur Waldo (Terry Camilleri) recovers from the accident that killed his brother and wrecked their car and caravan, just out of Paris, he is welcomed to the town by the Mayor (John McEldowney) who takes him to his home. There is a nicely cryptic scene at dinner,

intensifying the earlier suggestions at the hospital and in the street that all is not what it seems in Paris. Weir then cuts to a brilliantly-handled sequence where an accident victim is dealt with in the hospital while his car is being dismantled by oddly-uniformed workers and the local idiot leers over his trophy. The victim is stripped of his belongings, a drill is applied to his brain, the car is set fire to while faces, including the Mayor's, watch from the window.

In the following sequence, Arthur decides to leave town, watched again by curious eyes. While waiting at the run-down bus station, he is asked to step down to the Council Chambers for a few words with the Mayor who tells him, "You're basically normal . . . but you may not stay that way", and draws his attention to the "vegges" in the Bellevue Ward of the hospital — other accident victims who don't even know their names.

Arthur's confidence is convincingly under-

mined by the knowledge of "two lives on his conscience" (his brother's and that of an old man he accidentally killed a year before), by his inability to persuade anyone that he was dazzled by lights on the night of his accident, and by the sense of the whole town's being terrifyingly caught up in the accident trade. In one unobtrusive shot, an old lady trades a shining hubcap for clothes. In church, the clergyman speaks of his two hobbies: the past "manifest in lovely old towns like Paris", and the future, which is with the young and the forthcoming car gymkhana.

When the Mayor pursues Arthur into the countryside on a sunny Sunday afternoon, one gets a quintessential Weir image: a deceptively sleepy little town surrounded by comfortable hills. Part of the film's horror is in its claustrophobia: one longs to be reassured that there is wholesome life out there, but Weir, true to what seems his belief that there are some terrors from which there may be no easy escape, doesn't allow the audience such comfort. When the Mayor catches up with Arthur he explains, with alarming blandness, that there is something missing in his family — a son — and that he wants Arthur to settle permanently and "become part of my family". (He has a twitchy wife called Beth and two adopted daughters who were orphaned when their parents were killed in an accident.) "One thing close families don't do . . . they don't talk to outsiders like Ted Mulray", the clergyman, whom Arthur had wanted to confide in and who is later brought in dead.

The film moves in a series of fluently-constructed sequences which show a flair for narrative rhythm and tonal variety that Weir has not surpassed in his later films. What is so exhilarating about the film is the way it spikes its mounting horror with black comedy. The wit is there in the odd line, like the clergyman's words at the funeral, "Gosh, Lord, sometimes you work in ways that are incomprehensible", or in the callous talk of the "midnight chorus" of the hospital "veggies". But more importantly, it is worked into the texture of crucial sequences like that of the morning service at church during which beat-up cars circle the car wreck that acts as a monument to the town's centre. The crash and bang of these cars compete with *Invisible*, *Invisible*, *God only one* in the church. The clergyman's position is teasingly enigmatic; one doesn't know where he stands until his body is brought in.

In the film's final sequence — the mayoral fancy dress ball and the attack of the spiked



Dr Madmad (Kevin Minto) and the Mayor examine a "successful" car wreck. *The Cars That Ate Paris*.

monster-cars — comedy and horror jostle for our responses, the one heightening the other. The Mayor has warned a reluctant Arthur that "Nobody leaves Paris. No one. Now you get into those clothes. You're going to the ball." The film then cuts to the galvanized iron Town Hall, where the "veggies" in masks are wheeled in and stage-managed by the appallingly genial doctor. The Mayor, in absurd beard as one of Paris' founding fathers, makes a speech about the town's future ("Have you the strength to travel the short distance?"), and ends by leading the Paris school war cry.

The authentic sound of the country town dance band floats outside to be drowned by the arrival of the cars, bent on reprisal for burning the car of one of the gang. The spikes on the leading car climb into the frame from the bottom right corner, in a brilliantly-angled shot, then fill the screen. The orgy of destruction which follows is directed with a fine eye for clarity and horror: the Mayor attacks the cars with a pole, someone else is caught on the spikes of a car while trying to spear it, and Arthur, forced to become part of the mayhem, regains his confidence by squashing a car and killing its "yobbo" driver. Arthur drives out as traps are being laid to stop exit from the ruined town; his face, half-obscured by the darkness, is smiling triumphantly as he heads for . . . what? It is a dark insight, indeed, that to cope with life it may be necessary to exercise one's basest, most murderous instincts.

Like most Australian directors, Weir has not yet shown himself markedly an actor's director, and there is some fairly rudimentary characterization here for which his own script must bear some responsibility. Nevertheless,

Meillon's deceptively platitudinous family-man Mayor and Camilleri's sensitive, suffering Arthur are substantial performances, and carry much of the film's weight of meaning — that is, in their respective suggestions of the potential for violence and horror behind blandly ordinary facades. If the other actors have less scope to develop characters, they are effective in their contribution to the film's suggestion of a rotten little town, of a mindless, dangerous cupidity at work, and John McLean's camera uses the Panavision screen to reinforce one's sense of a horrifyingly enclosed community.

Questions like Why is Arthur permitted to survive without being reduced to a "veggie"? and Why has there never been any investigation of the Paris road toll? are worrying as one thinks back on the film or sees it more than once. But on first viewing, at least, the grim fantasy set in the seedy realism of Paris (and this is very accurately rendered) takes a firm hold on one's imaginative receptiveness. *Cars* is more than a promising first feature, in it, Weir reveals a thoroughly comprehensive

grasp of his material, a tautness and coherence that have not been common in Australia's recent films.

Certainly the most popular of Weir's films to date with the public and the critics is *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. On re-viewing, the film still appears as visually stunning as one had remembered, but its ideas and their dramatic realization seem considerably less impressive. Before the credits begin there is a bold statement of the "facts" of the case, ending with the sentence "During the afternoon, several members of the party disappeared without trace." This foreword is almost like Weir's thumbing his nose at anything as vulgar as narrative interest, as though his film will have more important things on its mind. In the event, I believe he muffs the chance of telling an absorbing story in favor of provocative suggestions of smothered sexuality and a determinedly metaphysical approach to matters like time and dreams.

If this sounds rather grudging, it should be



Confrontation in the main street of Paris. *The Cars That Ate Paris*

mod. clear that Weir's films do have ideas, and often interesting ones. The critical question is whether he can integrate them convincingly into the texture of the film as a whole — in the behaviour and relationships of his characters in the situations in which he has placed them — or whether they are somewhat arbitrarily imposed on the film's structure. In the tautly-made tele-feature, *The Plumber*, he comes closer to this kind of integration than in either *Picnic* or *The Last Wave*, in both of which there is too much nudging at and underlining of the "significance" of the action.

Picnic certainly has a most evocative opening. A bird call is heard over a pale wash of trees and mist from which the monolith of Hanging Rock emerges, at first distant and then close up, always ominous, in the way that John Ford makes great rock faces threatening and mysterious in *The Searchers*. A school-girl's voice is then heard intoning "What we see, and what we seem, are but a dream. A dream within a dream . . .", and, as the voice gives way to Gheorghe Zamfir's haunting *Flute de Pan*, the brooding rock face is replaced by an exquisite girl's face on a pillow. Suddenly girls are washing, dressing in white, reading their St Valentine's Day cards, their suppressed sexual longings given romantic focus in the banal verses of the cards. One girl, fat Edith (Christine Schaller), is merely counting her cards as possessions, their romance is lost on her. And she will later resist the pull of the Rock and return screaming to the rest of the school party.

These two motifs — the Rock, with its sense of ageless knowledge, and adolescent sexual yearning — are there from the start, and the film makes the audience keep them in mind together. Whatever happens to the girls and the teacher, who disappear on the Rock, the film insists on an obscure sexual connection. The three girls who disappear, leaving Edith behind, seem almost to float through the trees, as if to the embrace of a lover. The young English aristocrat, Michael Fitzhubert (Dominic Guard), and the Australian groom, Albert (John Jarrett), who observe them, respond — the one with quivering sensitivity, the other with crude realism — to the sexual challenge of the fleeting image. When the police sergeant, Bumphrey (Wyn Roberts), questions Michael about why he followed the girls, he asks, "As the girls were jumping the creek, what were you thinking of?" It is clear what he has in mind.

Later, Edith prudishly recalls that as she was





rushing down from the Rock she passed the missing teacher, Miss McCraw (Vivian Gray), running up without her dress. Miss McCraw had been the most thoroughly dressed of the party in severe brown costume and hat, unlike the rest in filmy white. It is as though the experience of the Rock has released her from the inhibitions of respectability.

When one of the girls, Irma (Karen Robson), is found by Michael, Mrs Appleyard (Rachel Roberts), the headmistress, asks the doctor whether she had been "molested", but the doctor assures her that "She is quite intact", and mutters the comment twice again — to the sergeant and to the Fitzhubert's housekeeper. The maid at Colonel Fitzhubert's home, where Irma is convalescing, confides to the housekeeper that Irma was wearing no corset when found, and the housekeeper tells her she was quite right to suppress this information.

The climax to this persistent connection of sexuality and the experience of the Rock comes in the scene in which the recovered Irma visits the school gym to say goodbye to her fellow pupils. She is clad in long crimson cloak and crimson hat, a striking figure as she appears in the doorway, flanked in the frame by the two rows of girls doing posture exercises. Whatever has happened to Irma — and she has refused to tell Michael what happened on the Rock — it has changed her from romantic schoolgirl to assured woman. The girls sense a new knowledge about her and crowd around hysterically, demanding explanations. Miss Lumley (Kristy Child), the gym mistress, watches slyly, she wants to know too, but Irma, alarmed at the onslaught, can tell nothing.

But once all these connections have been noted one is left asking, Why? Is it Weir's intention to use Joan Lindsay's novel merely as the bases for a study of certain aspects of adolescent sexuality? Certainly this element is pervasive in the film as it is not in the novel. The Rock, viewed in this way, may perhaps be seen as a symbol of ancient knowingsness as compared with the superficial learning and accomplishments the school offers. Again, the Rock, by being so wholly itself, organic and primitive, unlike the recently-erected stone pile of the school, excites a loosening of the moral corsets — it is alluring and terrifying, tempting the girls to behave instinctively, rather than respectably, and exacting an

Left: Edith (Christine Schiller) and Miss McCraw (Vivian Gray), with her geometry book, at the foot of the Rock. Pleinla: at Hanging Rock.



The girls, minus their stockings, reach a plateau on the Rock. *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.

awesome price for their succumbing to such a temptation.

Russell Boyd's camera again and again catches the threat and massive inscrutability of the Rock's faces, contrasting these with the lushness of the surrounding foliage and the soft billowing whiteness of the girls' dresses. (He does equally well in capturing — no doubt Weir's intention — the oppressive Victorian facade and interiors of the other monolith set down in the bush, Appleyard College, whose incongruity in the scene is established at first by the oddly exotic palm trees that flank it.) Striking overhead shots of the girls climbing through narrow passes on the rocks reinforce the threat and enticement it offers, and the piercing flute notes of the soundtrack conspire with the camera's articulation of some nameless dread.

If there is too much lingering over the beauty of Miranda (Anne Lambert) turning her head in the sun or of Irma gracefully

waving her arms, there are also genuinely erotic touches — for instance, in the removal of stockings and boots as the girls begin their exploration of the Rock. Mrs Appleyard has told them, "You may remove your gloves once you have passed through Woodend", inadvertently hinting at the loss of inhibition that will follow at the Rock itself. Her warning about the dangers of the Rock passes unheeded, so does Edith's later complaint that "It's nasty here."

The film works best as a somewhat lushly poetic study of suppressed and burgeoning sexuality. The stealthy giggles of the girls at the college; the orphaned Sara's (Margaret Nelson) crush on that "Botticelli Angel", Miranda; the pretty French mistress (Helen Morse) who uses powder because she finds it "becoming"; Michael's obsession with the girl he has seen on the Rock, even Mrs Appleyard's yearning for her "utterly dependable husband": all these point to the film's

intelligent interest in the sexual instinct and its manifestations in a generally oppressive environment. Only among the servants (a simplistic but possibly accurate touch) is there an openly acknowledged interest in sex. Albert imagines the girls' legs in terms Michael finds crude; Minnie, the school maid (Jacki Weaver), is seen in bed with her boyfriend, Tom the gardener (Anthony Llewellyn-Jones), and tells him, "I feel sorry for them kids." This, incidentally, is one of the few moments when the film shows a genuine compassion for any of its characters.

But if the sexual motif represents the film's most coherently pursued interest, give or take the enigmatic role of the Rock in all this, the audience is left with a number of other dissatisfying elements. What, for instance, are we to make of the situation of the orphan Sara? Because her guardian has not paid her fees, Mrs Appleyard decides she must "make other arrangements" for her. Not surprising in ordinary circumstances, but surely it is odd that she should pursue this matter when the school is crumbling around her as the aftermath of the picnic. Again, the suggestion that Sara is the sister of Albert (both talk of a sibling they lost touch with after leaving the orphanage) is a curiously undeveloped tangent to the film's main action, and Sara's death seems merely gratuitous.

What significance does one attach to the film's adumbrations of class-consciousness: in the town's attitude to the school (little boys run shouting after the drag as it takes the school party through Woodend); in Tom's class-based resistance to Minnie's sympathy

for "them kids", in the fossilized Fitzhughs whose picnic scene is critically placed as a still life by contrast with the school's noisy party; and, especially, in the exchanges between Michael and Albert? These latter fairly obviously point up different approaches to the matter of sex and to the whole episode of the Rock, but it is not clear where the film stands in relation to either of them.

Mrs Appleyard's collapse under the strain of the girls' disappearance and the loss of the teacher she had relied on might have provided the means for pulling together interest in the film's main events. Rachel Roberts plays her with a grim gentility that is very oppressive — her background of Bourmemouth holidays is clearly socially inferior to that of most of the girls and she maintains her control by an iron exercise of the will that is compelling to observe.

The camera frequently stresses her heavily repressive dominance as when, on the top of the school steps, she warns the girls of the dangers of the Rock, or when she hovers threateningly over Sara who has not learnt the prescribed poem (by "Mrs Felicia Heymans . . . one of the finest of our English poets"), but has written one herself. The film's treatment of Mrs Appleyard, often locally very telling, is in the end too scrappy for the final announcement of her death, at the foot of Hanging Rock, to have the impact it might have had.

Then there is the question of the film's metaphysical preoccupations which it wears on its exquisite sleeve, rather than locating them more centrally. "What we see, and what we



The Saint Valentine's Day breakfast at Appleyard College: Picnic at Hanging Rock.



Irene (Karen Roberts), who enters from the Rock a woman, not a girl: Picnic at Hanging Rock.



seem, are but a dream. A dream within a dream." This is the opening sentence on the soundtrack; it sets up expectations that the rest of the film does little to gratify. Perhaps we assume that the episode of the Rock (strange things happening, if not emerging) is merely a dream within the larger dream of life itself, but the notion is too romantically vague to engage the mind.

The same might be said for Miranda's gnome utterance that "Everything begins — and ends — at exactly the right time and place." This bit of aphoristic tosh precedes the much more sharply cinematic insight caught by Miss McCraw's worried looking up from the ascertainable truths of the geometry text she is reading to the Rock which yields no answers. Irma, much later pondering the end of the summer, quotes Miranda's words about the right time and place as though they meant something. If they do, the film does not make us privy to that meaning.

Cliff Green's screenplay is often shrewdly right, especially in its dealings with Mrs Appleyard, but, in the end, it is indiscriminating. It does not focus sharply enough on the facts of the disappearance; it does not compel attention firmly on what exactly happened at Hanging Rock. Not that the audience requires him to offer an answer to the riddle, but that the nature of riddle and after-effects should be kept more clearly before it.

The film's grasp of narrative, as distinct from its intimations of dread among the summer lushness and stillness, is very uncertain. When Sergeant Bumphreys appears and the investigation begins, the film takes a new narrative turn and tone, the effect of which is not dramatic contrast but incongruity in relation to what has gone before. The details of the search are perfunctorily handled and this can't be justified by drawing a parallel with Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'avventura*. Picnic at this stage needs the interest that the search might provide and the screenplay allows this to be dissipated by peripheral matters, not offering an equivalent to Antonioni's growing preoccupation with the relationship between the searchers.

The film builds up an impressive — even tantalizing — atmosphere, but does so at the cost of pursuing a little more ruthlessly what is certainly a very fascinating story. David Ansen, reviewing the film in *Newsweek*, is right to

Left: Sara (Margaret Nelson), the orphan, during the breakfast picnic at Hanging Rock.



In a dream sequence, Chris Lee (Gulpilil) appears holding the sacred stone. *The Last Wave*.

claim, after praising Weir's "languid, sun-dappled images", that "there's something hollow at the core, an unearned sense of importance, a reliance on mere word to suggest mystical depths".⁴

Nevertheless, despite his failure to integrate all the elements of his film, Weir still shows in *Picnic* a heartening capacity to go beyond the literal-minded realism of most Australian cinema of the '70s. He already knows how to realize imaginatively such fundamental dichotomies as nature vs civilization, the real vs the ideal, the instinct vs the will. He is not afraid to dangle ideas even if he is not yet rigorous enough in pursuing them. In retrospect, it may seem the excitement that greeted *Picnic* in 1975 had less to do with actual achievement than with its revelation of an imaginative potential rare to the point of uniqueness in the Australian film industry.

Whatever its lapses, *Picnic* is not parochial; it is the work of a man with a vision of life, a vision in which dangerous forces are always menacing life's orderly surfaces, surfaces that can be made to reflect frightening depths.

The first third of *The Last Wave* is as fine as anything Weir has done. It is cryptic, allusive and demanding in the resonances it sets up. Behind the credits an Aboriginal is painting on the roof of a cave which opens like a large mouth, a black hand, protruding from a Western coat sleeve, completes a curious sign — three concentric circles with four dots in



"We are witnessing nature at work." Violent rain hits an outback school. *The Last Wave*.

the centre — which will be a central motif throughout the rest of the film.

The camera then cuts to a parched scene in a central Australian township where, under a cloudless sky, a group of Aborigines sits surrounded by a squalid heap of possessions and some children play cricket in the heat. A child drinks avidly from a hose. Suddenly, without warning, rain, then hail, bursts from the empty sky. The excited children huddle in the school house and, as huge hailstones shatter the windows and children are cut, the teacher tells them prosily: "We are witnessing nature at work."

The next cut (and the film's "punctuation" at this stage is as arbitrary and mystifying as I mean to suggest) is to Sydney, where the camera closes in on an Aboriginal drinking at a fountain. As David Burton (Richard Chamberlain), a company lawyer, leaves the carpark attached to his office building, the attendant gives him a yellow pepper for his wife and he comments on the oddity of its color.

Out in the streets, the scene is a noisy muddle of cars, umbrellas, people shouting in a chaos testifying to man's incapacity to deal with a freak of nature. On the car radio, David hears that "an unusually widespread low-pressure trough moving up from the southern polar ice" is the cause of the downpour, and the audience registers this as a scientific attempt to explain and demystify the unusual. As the film goes on, David's dilemma is increasingly a matter of the rational man's failure to find satisfying answers to the bizarre. Weir has established early what the film's central pro-

4 David Ansen, "Rocky Horror", *Newsweek*, July 5, 1979.



Billy (Athol Compton) at the pub, where his pursuers have come for him. *The Last Wave*.

occupation will be: the breakdown of man's resources in areas where rationality cannot serve him. Or as Richard Schickel in reviewing *Picnic* has written: "There is something else Weir wants to say — that in society, a sense of order is a very fragile thing. If people do not allow for the inexplicable, then they will collapse of shock when chance makes its inevitable appearance."⁵

As David returns to the seeming safety and sanity of his suburban home, with his pleasant wife Annie (Olivia Hammett) and two children, he — and the audience — seems to have gained a refuge from the unpredictabilities of nature. The family sits to eat and all is cosy until a sound of running water inside the house is heard. In this black little joke of Weir's (recalling the tone of *Cars*) the rivulet on the stairs proves to be only the result of the bath's having overflowed, both children naturally denying responsibility for the accident. David is, however, oddly drawn by the rain and dreams he sees through the window a black figure standing in the rain.

The scene jumps to a barbecue at the home of David's clergyman step-father (Frederick Parslow). The camera records the church serenely set against sea and clear sky, then pans across a wide lawn to the barbecue where everyone is relaxed except David, worried at the telephone. When he tells his step-father about the bad dreams that have lately cost him sleep, his step-father recalls to him his childhood dreams about people "who come and steal your body while you sleep". Annie,

meanwhile, plays with their daughter in the spray of the lawn sprinkler. The spray, against the clear sky, dissolves into dark storm clouds, lightning and driving rain, ushering in the final episode of this opening movement of the film.

The camera lights briefly on a Danger sign and tracks after an Aboriginal youth, Billy (Athol Compton), stealing sacred stones from tribal grounds beneath the city sewers. This ironic juxtaposition — the 'benefits' of civilization imposed on sacred grounds — is unobtrusively and exactly made. The camera cuts to Billy drunk in a pub, suddenly aware that his pursuers have come for him. From here, the film moves swiftly through the hunting down of Billy to a dark street where an old Aboriginal, in a car, points the bone of death at him.

It is worth describing these sequences in some detail because everything in them is done so sharply, with such a sophisticated eye for detail and such rigorous concern for relevance. The abrupt changes of scene nevertheless create a powerfully sustained narrative rhythm and a texture of meshing allusiveness. That the film is so completely absorbing to this point is partly due to Weir's finely discriminating sense of what he needs from each episode and of his very controlled pacing within and between episodes. As well, the screenplay (Weir is co-author with Tony Morphett and Petru Popescu) to this point is literate and quietly witty, and strikes a balance between specific, individualizing touches and suggestions of some wider dislocation, and cameraman Boyd lights all this so as to emphasize the hints and threats inherent in the script.

Compared with this splendid first third, the rest of the film is only intermittently holding. The screenplay credit, "Based on an idea by Peter Weir", is perhaps the clue to why. The "idea", I take it, is David Burton's growing belief that he has a special affinity with the tribal Aboriginals who killed Billy, and whose defence he undertakes. As he learns of the Aboriginals' approach to cycles of time, he begins to believe that he is a descendant of an ancient race which, according to Aboriginal tradition, inhabited Australia in pre-historic times. His increasing sense of alienation from his middle-class life is intensified by his step-father telling him that, as a child, he had predicted his mother's death.

In the film's last episode, Chris (Gulpitil) takes him to the sacred tribal grounds where David sees his own likeness in a stone face and interprets the wall painting to mean that the

5 Richard Schickel, "Vanishing Point", *Time*, April 23, 1979.

present cycle of time will end with a giant wave.

In an outline like this I am aware that the idea sounds faintly silly. In fact it has persuasive inner logic of good fantasy and if Weir had addressed himself more singlemindedly to working out its details, the film might have maintained the promise of its opening sequence. In ways sometimes reminiscent of Nicolas Roeg's *Don't Look Now*, the film's most moving and daring element is the breakdown of the rational man's belief in and hold on the certainties and guidelines of his life. Chamberlain's essentially Anglo-Saxon blandness is convincingly modified by his growing fears and by his fascination with the non-rational forces that bear on men's lives — even on the lives of supposedly civilized man.

However, the film does not move in quite this clear-cut way, and loses some of its impetus as a result. The trial of the Aborigines and the cross-examinations leading up to it pass for comparatively little. It might have been expected that Weir would use the trial to

focus much more sharply than he does the attempt to measure, by one set of laws, behaviour that derives from an utterly different code. There are good individual moments, of course: David's questioning of the Aboriginal youths about how Billy died, with the camera panning around their faces which clearly conceal a truth they cannot/will not articulate; the meaninglessness of Chris' courtroom oath, "So help me God"; and his refusal at the crucial moment to co-operate with David as this would mean revealing their tribal customs.

But such accurately achieved moments are offset by the film's vague liberalism in its treatment of the Aborigines. The colleague (Peter Carroll) from Legal Aid who involves David in the case (and it's not clear why David should have struck him as the man for the job) talks of dispelling a "few romantic notions" about Aborigines, claiming that there are no tribal Aborigines in the city. "We've killed their songs, dances and laws." Later he accuses



White, middle-class David Burton (Richard Chamberlain) with his client Chris Lee: *The Last Wave*.

David of a "middle-class patronizing attitude" towards the blacks when he, Michael, decides to pull out of the case because he doesn't believe the "tribal people" stuff. The film needs to sharpen the point I assume it is making here: that is, that well-meaning humanitarianism is as likely as cool rationalism to be unsusceptible to the profoundest truths about those it aims to help.

This would have given a more ironic value to the subsequent scene with the anthropologist (the excellent Vivean Gray, again) who explains to David the connection of the sacred stone with the Dreamtime, "more real than reality itself." This scientist's factual account resonates with an understanding that eludes the Legal Aid man. She knows that some people (Mulkrul, "a race of spirits from the rising sun") have more contact with the Dreamtime than others and ends by saying, "Frankly I think none of us [i.e., whites] has the spiritual power." This is acknowledgment of the superior perception of which the Aboriginal mind is capable, and unwittingly ironic because she is unaware of David's growing sense of his own affinity with the Dreamtime. This scene, placed between that of David's quarrel with his Legal Aid friend and that of the mounting fear of David's wife who has seen a black man in the garden, has a thematic centrality in the film that is belied by its too low-key treatment. One feels that more should be made of the contrast between Dr Whitburn's calm but emotionally-toned approach and the two kinds of incomprehension that flank it.

The film's central section unmistakably says. It suffers from undue explicitness on the one hand and irritating obliqueness on the other. The explicitness jars in comments like Annie's when she is waiting for Chris to come to dinner "I'm a fourth generation Australian and I've never met an Aboriginal before", underlining the cultural chasm that her husband must bridge, in the clichéd writing that announces her growing fear and estrangement from David ("I can't talk to you any more. I don't know you any more"), and especially in David's visit to his step-father, a clergyman—"I've lost the world that meant anything", David laments, and attacks his step-father's faith because it "explains away mysteries".

One of Weir's strengths is his capacity for accepting mysteries but, if he does not try to explain them, or to rob them of their essential strangeness, he certainly does seem interested in illuminating them.

In this he is a good deal less successful.

David's efforts to understand tribal laws and beliefs, the connections between his ancestry and his understanding of tribal secrets; his tracking down of Charlie, the older Aboriginal whose totemic identification is that of an owl, to a dismal rooming house and the subsequent incantations that lead to David's acceptance of his role as "Mulkrul"—these produce a narrative effect that is not so much mysterious as merely confusing.

Perhaps the screenplay is at fault here. Despite Chamberlain's careful, intelligent performance, one simply does not know enough about David to feel a sympathetic engagement in his crisis, and this is an emotional weakness in the film. More than this, though, I believe Weir's weakness is that he lets this central section of the film run off after too many tangents, as he does in the latter part of *Picnic*. He does not focus clearly and firmly enough on the breaking down of David's rational concepts and his gradual acceptance of other ways of approaching experience. The struggle between his rational responses and the deeper urges he begins to feel within him need a more pointed dramatization than they get.

As I have suggested, Weir relies too much on mystic and cryptic *frissons* and on bold statements about beliefs and laws. As an *oeuvre* he is as recognizable by his faults as by his strengths.

Unlike *Picnic*, however, *The Last Wave* does pull itself together for its final movement. Following the trial (the outcome of which is none too clear), David goes looking for Charlie whose room is now deserted, and the pervasive water imagery becomes more insistent,



Dr Whitburn (Vivean Gray) explains to David the meaning of the sacred stone. *The Last Wave*

linked now with menacing underwater effects on the soundtrack. David's own suburban house is wrecked by the storm as an owl (Charlie) watches. Chris suddenly appears at his door with the sacred stone (marked like the cave-painting in the opening scene) and he takes David to the eerily beautiful tribal grounds — underground caves reached through the sewers. In mounting excitement David examines the wall-paintings which, with the prophetic gift he now accepts, he interprets as foretelling the end of another time cycle by means of a tidal wave.

There is real terror and tension in this sequence, an awareness indeed of "strange things" emerging, and the dark spots on the wall-painting recall the "black rain" which windscreen wipers had earlier striven ineffectually to deal with. Chris has vanished and Charlie, who has feared where David's search is leading him, appears and grapples with David. Presumably (and the film is not clear about this) Charlie is killed and David, after losing his torch, gropes his way out above ground.

The film ends, enigmatically, with David on a beach as a huge wave approaches. He has fought his way back from subterranean regions (psychic as well as physical) to face the apocalyptic vision of destruction that his Mulkril affinities have enabled him to predict. It is a striking finale, if not emotionally or intellectually wholly satisfying, and it does carry a persuasive sense, not of denouement, but of horror still to come.

There is a more powerful cinematic intelligence at work in *The Last Wave* than in

Picnic. Having sacrificed the fluent, rigorous narrative lines of *Cars* for something at once more adventurous and less controlled in *Picnic* and fallen victim to *Creeping Beauty* and *Higher Thought*, Weir has certainly gained ground in *The Last Wave*. His capacity to create an unsettling atmosphere is, in the best sections of *The Last Wave*, at the service of an economical and highly charged narrative.

I have compared him with Roeg (Weir shares, too, his fascination with the eloquent Aboriginal actor Gulpill, first seen in *Walkabout*), at his best — that is, at his most unnerving — he can withstand comparison with the Hitchcock of *The Birds*. The intellectual framework of the film is more interesting than it is in *Picnic*, and, despite the urge to explicitness which he shares with Australian novelists, Weir shows an increasing capacity to render his ideas in dramatic action and telling imagistic patterns.

In *The Plumber*, Weir pursues further his interest in the way the educated mind, detached by its education from the springs of its instinctive life, responds when exposed to more primitive threats. Max, the plumber of the title, offers some of the same kinds of challenge to the educated mind that the Rock and the secrets of *Dreamtime* lore do in the two preceding films.

The Plumber is a much less ambitious work than *Picnic* or *The Last Wave*, and is in some ways more satisfactory. It is terse, tightly-scripted (by Weir), intelligent in its examination of the academic middle class confronted by crude, teasing ambivalence, and resorting to



David watches his torch flint away as he makes his way out of the sewers. *The Last Wave*



Jill Cowper (Judy Morris), right, confesses to Max (Gandy Raymond) her fears about the plumber. *The Plumber*



Jill looks anxiously as Max (Ivor Kants) demonstrates his affection for Bob Dylan. *The Plumber*

methods it would ordinarily despise to maintain its control. Unlike the two earlier films, *The Plumber* resists large abstractions, except insofar as they are firmly embodied in its central dramatic situation, and is in consequence a much tidier, more coherent work, its ideas under more rigorous discipline.

It raises, therefore, the critical question of whether to value more the artistic enterprise that knows exactly where it is headed and arrives there, or the more adventurous work that is inevitably flawed, a bit unwieldy, but also richer in texture. I don't wish to answer this question, but to draw attention to the diversity of Weir's interests and methods, to his readiness to work on larger and smaller canvases. If it is easier for him to be successful with *Cars* and *The Plumber*, the kinds of failures that are part of *Picnic* and *The Last Wave* may ultimately prove more rewarding. The very sense of their incompletely realized intentions perhaps tantalizes critical speculation more than the trimmings of the other two films.

Not that *The Plumber* is without blemishes; it suffers some of the same kinds of basic credibility problems that are worrying in *Cars*.

Why, for instance, does the nice young academic wife, getting on with her MA thesis in anthropology, simply not refuse to admit the plumber without some token of his *bona fides* or, having let him turn the bathroom into a scaffolding jungle, get the university maintenance department to inspect what he is up to?

However, granted that Max (Ivor Kants) does talk his way into the flat (one in a huge impersonal block), the film goes very convincingly about its business of unsettling the poised Jill Cowper (Judy Morris) by the kind of threat Max's appealingly genial/dangerous presence represents. The centrally teasing concept is in the ironic juxtaposition of Jill's coolly detached study of primitive Nugini highlanders and her rapid emotional disintegration in the face of Max's potentially threatening primitivism. The concept would be more clear-cut, and consequently less teasing, if the audience could be sure that Max was really a threat to Jill's scholarly composure, or even that he was really a plumber. A parallel complicating element in Jill is that one can't be sure how far her composure is a matter of immersion in her academic pursuits, how far a matter of her husband's work-obsessed neglect of her

"Your pipes — if you'll pardon the expression — are bugged", Max tells Jill, after a brief inspection, with a leer that may or may not be sexual knowingness. And later, after observing a jar of Nettle Hair Tonic in the bathroom, he asks, "Is your husband losing his hair? It's all to do with hormones. Intellectual types often lose their hair." Max seems to be implying that he sees the Cowpers' marriage in a bad way.

He further denigrates the academic lifestyle by drawing attention to the Nugini artifacts strewn around the flat — "This boozing stuff brings a good bit of coin these days" — and by a leering reference to a fertility symbol. Whatever Max is, whether he is a bully who might have rape on mind, or whether he is just a harmless freak, he is inadvertently right about the Cowpers.

Brian Cowper (Robert Coleby) is too concerned with impressing some visiting World Health Organization scientists, in Adelaide to inspect his research and possibly to recommend him for a post in Geneva, to take seriously Jill's anxieties about Max. The audience is prepared for Brian's self-absorption in the opening scene. As Jill recalls an experience in Nugini with a frightening native ("I knew I must keep perfectly still" — an ironic foreshadowing of her attitude to Max), Brian takes no more than perfunctory interest and facetiously suggests she should use the anecdote in her MA and turn it into a best-seller. She is unused to the direct appraisal she gets from Max. "You're real decent. Mind you, you're a bit on the neurotic side if you don't mind me saying so."

Max's raucous, blatant approach is neatly contrasted with Brian's scientific talk with his colleagues about contraception and fertility rites among the natives. He is too busy with work and his visitors even to find time to check out Max's credentials with the maintenance department. Meanwhile, Max is belting on the window as Jill tries to immerse herself in primitive music; when she doesn't let him in, he simply climbs through the bathroom ceiling. On his third visit he brings his guitar (he is a folk singer who admires Bob Dylan's uncompromising lyrics, he says) and Jill's primitive music is now in competition with his.

Is he really setting out to undermine her confidence in the cool exercise of the intellect? Is it in response to her perception of the threat he offers that she puts him down, in front of her friend Meg (Candy Raymond), by correcting his grammar? Does he leave the bathroom

in a hideous mess to humiliate her — and her husband — on the evening when Brian is bringing the overseas visitors home to dinner? Weir maintains a lively ambivalence about Max and, indeed, Jill, until one is not sure whether he is cunning or she is neurotic. By the end of the film he has reduced her to screaming at him, and she confesses to Brian, while they dine out to celebrate his Geneva job, that she was losing control.

Weir is interested in pushing rational control to the very edge, to explore just how much stress it can stand before breaking. When the shoddily-repaired bathroom floods on the fourth morning, Max reappears, and there is a suggestion that Jill may never again be fully restored to her early composure. Perhaps, without being conscious of it, she has wanted to respond to Max's sexual challenge. Perhaps part of her really agrees with Meg who says, "You've got to admit, if you get a really spunky guy round the house all day it can be a bit of a turn-on."

The film is finally a criticism of the blandly sterile academic life, though the latter is not set up as a target for simplistic satire. One does believe in the work Brian and Jill are doing, their absorption in it is convincing. The basis of the criticism is two-fold: first, such absorption has tended to cut them off from the life of their



Brian (Robert Coleby) and Jill Cowper, representatives of the academic middle class. *The Plumber*



The Cowper concert visiting WHO scientists, while their bathroom has under siege **The Plumber**

instincts which have been educated into non-disturbing dormancy; and, second, it leads Jill to debase her intellect into cunning to destroy Max.

In an unusual overhead shot (and David Sanderson's camerawork is essentially discreet throughout) the police are seen closing in on the plumber as he arrives in the car park on the fifth day. The audience is, in fact, observing the scene from Jill's superior position on the top-storey balcony of her block of flats, as the police recover her watch from where she has planted it in Max's van. He can only scream at her, "You bloody bitch", while she looks on with what is left of her control, for the moment aloofly secure.

This last scene has the effect of confusing audience sympathies. Max's outburst seems the result of open instinctive life being put down by the cunning of the educated. Jill seems to have over-reacted to his blundering challenge and certainly the planting of the watch is a genuinely nasty-minded way of getting rid of him. (The business of the missing watch is the least convincing thing in the film, in Jill's cryptic attitude to it and as well as in Brian's anger at how much it has cost him.) But two things work against this shift of sympathy to Max: first, the recollection of his observing Jill and Brian, unseen, through the window on the balcony on the second evening; and, second, the composition of a shot on the fourth morning when Max's leather-gloved hand appears at the open window of his van, at the bottom left of the screen, as if, again unseen, he is waiting for Brian's departure.

The film leaves the audience with this teas-

ing ambivalence unresolved, and it is part of its purpose that it should not be resolved. Whatever Max is up to, Jill's response to him has shown the inadequacy of the intellectual middle-class approach when it comes to dealing, at first-hand, with much rawer material than it is used to. Max may or may not be a thug, but Brian and Jill's life — its preoccupations and their relationship — is exposed as jejune for all their intellectual striving and casually Gracious Living.

What else is certain is that, in his study of Jill, Weir has again found middle-class defences inadequate in the face of more basic urges and fears. Equally, it could be argued that, through Max, the film explores the inadequacy of the working classes in failing to understand and cope with a more sophisticated set of signals.

To those expecting Weir to move further in the direction of apocalyptic vision, **The Plumber** may seem a disappointment, I prefer to see it as heartening evidence of his capacity to work in a much tighter framework. His control over the details of *mise-en-scene* and his actors (all three leads give excellent performances) enables him to make his theoretical points in terms of firmly realized dramatic situation. He shows that he can disturb by focusing attention on the facts of everyday life and by showing that this "everyday life" is always susceptible to the "threat and danger" of unexpected forces. These may be the forces within the audience which it suppresses or they may be objectified in an intruding Max.

As the euphoria surrounding the burgeoning Australian cinema of the '70s recedes, and the films are subjected to a tougher scrutiny than has so far been the case, I suspect that not many of them will reveal much slaying power. Fred Schepisi's **The Devil's Playground** (1976) and **The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith** (1978), both responsible, intelligent films, Philip Noyce's likeable **Newsfront** (1978), and Giffian Armstrong's **My Brilliant Career** (1979), locating contemporary relevance in an exquisite evocation of the past, should hold up. Above them all though, I believe Peter Weir's *oeuvre* will be the chief claim of the '70s to a place in film history. He may continue to make mistakes, but they will be the mistakes of a director with ideas to spare, and a relish for the medium in which he has chosen to express and explore them.

Filmography

Shorts

- 1967 *Cost View's Last Exercise*, 16mm, black and white, 5 mins.
 1968 *The Life and Flight of the Reverend Buckaboo*, 16mm, black and white, 33 mins.
 1969 *Three Is Go* (Michael episode only)
 1970 *Searing the Peel*, 16mm, Eastmancolor, 10 mins.
 1971 *Homicide*, 16mm, black and white, 30 mins.
 1972 *Three Directions in Australian Pop Music*, 16mm, Eastmancolor, 10 mins.
 1973 *Incredible Florida*, 16mm, Eastmancolor, 12 mins.
 1973 *Whatever Happened to Green Valley?*, 16mm, Eastmancolor, 50 mins.

Television

- 1977 *Lake's Kingdom*. Weir directed two episodes

Features

1974

The Cars That Ate Paris. Producers: Jim McElroy, Hal McElroy. Director: Peter Weir. Screenwriters: Peter Weir, Keith Gow, Peter Dennis. Based on short story by Peter Weir. Photography: John McLean. Sound recordist: Ken Hayward. Editor: Wayne Le Cloa. Production designer: David Coppin. Composer: Bruce Sweeney. Production manager: Yoni Hegas. Production secretary: Pam Oliver. Production accountant: Pauline Ryan. 1st assistant director: Hal McElroy. 2nd assistant director: Ross Matthews. 3rd assistant director: Chris Noonan. Costitutor: Gilda Baracchi. Camera operators: Peter James, Richard Wallis. Focus puller: David Bun. Clapper/loader: Jimmy Allen. Key grip: Gwynne Mandell. Gaffer: Tony Tegg. Third electric: Mick Morris. Boom operator: Mike Midland. Make-up: Liz Michie. Wardrobe: Rae Williams. Set decorator: Neil Angwin. Sound editor: Sara Bennett. Editing assistant: Tom Polkney. Stunts co-ordinator: Peter Armstrong. Action vehicles: Alf Wright. Ben boy: Robby Young. Mixed at United Sound. Length: 91 mins. Gauge: 35mm Panavision. Shooting work: Eastmancolor. First released: 1974. Cast: Archibald (Terry Camilleri), Mayer (John Medlen), Beth (Melanie Jaffe), Dr Midland (Kevin Miles), Metcalfe (Max Gillies), Gorman (Peter Armstrong), Tringham (Edward Howell), Charlie (Bruce Spence), Al Smalley (Derek Barnes), Chive Smalley (Charlie Metcalfe), Daryl (Chris Heywood), Les (Tim Robertson), Rex Mowbray (Max Phipps), Con Lucas (Frank Saba), Max Madge (Joe Burrows), Arthur's brother (Rick Scully).

1975

Picnic at Hanging Rock. Producers: Hal McElroy, Jim McElroy. Executive producer: Patricia Lawell. Executive producer for the SAFC: John Graves. Director: Peter Weir. Screenwriter: Cliff Green. Based on the novel by Joan Lindsay. Photography: Russell Boyd. Sound recordist: Don Castaldi. Editor: Max Lemon. Composer and arranger: Bruce Sweeney, pan pipe by Georgea Zamper, and 2nd Movement of Beethoven's 5th Piano Concerto. Artistic adviser to the director: Martin Sharp. Production secretary: Pam Oliver. Production accountant: Joan McIntosh. SAFC accountant: Phil Smythe. Production assistant: Steve Keapman. 1st assistant director: Mark Egerton. 2nd assistant director: Kim Dalton. 3rd assistant director: Ian Jameson. Community: Gilda Baracchi. Script consultant: Sidney Sibbel. SAFC's producer's secretary: Jill Wabnitz. Casting consultants: M & L Casting Consultants. Camera

operator: John Seale. Focus puller: David Williamson. Clapper/loader: David Freeman. Key grip: George Brydes. Assistant grip: Phil Wanser. Nature photography: David Sanderson. Gaffer: Tony Tegg. Electric: Goolley Simpson. Boom operator: Joe Spadell. Art director: David Coppin. Assistant art director: Chris Webster. Assistant to art department: Neil Angwin. Costume designer: Judy Derisman. Associate designer: Endy Strim. Assistant designer: Mary Smith. Make-up: Joe Perc. Assistant make-up: Elizabeth Michie. Props: Peter Graham Walker. Standby props: Monte Figgitt. Set construction: Bill Howe. Assistant editor: Andre Flemin. Neg. matching: Margaret Carlin. Sound editor: Greg Bell. Editing assistants: Sherry Bell. Still photography: David Kynoch. Opticals: Optikal and Graphics. Wrangler: Tom Downer. Assistant wrangler: Gordon Kayser. Best boy: Trevor Toase. Studio: SAFC. Mixed at United Sound Laboratory. Colorfilm (Australia). Length: 115 mins. Gauge: 35mm. Shooting work: Eastmancolor. Cast: Mrs Appleby (Rachel Roberts), Michael Fitzhabet (Dermot Glynn), Diane de Portiers (Helen Morse), Max McEwen (Vivian Gray), Miriam (Jacki Weaver), Miss Larkley (Kerry Child), Tom (Anthony Dowling-Jones), Mr Whitehead (Frank Gennell), Miranda (Anne Lambert), Irma (Karen Robson), Marlon (Jane Valles), Edith (Christine Schaller), Sara (Margaret Nelson), Rosamund (Ingrid Mason), Blanche (Jenny Lovell), Julius (Joost Murray), Sergeant Bamber (Wyn Roberts), Mrs Bamber (Kay Taylor), Constable Jones (Garry McDonald), Ben Hanson (Martin Vaughan), Dr McKearie (Jack Pagan), Colonel Fitzhabet (Peter Collingwood), Mrs Fitzhabet (Olga Dickel), Albert Crundell (John Jarvis).

1977

The Last Wave. Producers: Hal McElroy, Jim McElroy. Director: Peter Weir. Screenwriters: Peter Weir, Tony Marphett, Petra Popescu. Based on the original idea by Peter Weir. Photography: Russell Boyd. Sound recordist: Don Connolly. Production manager: Ross Matthews. Location manager: Bev Davidson. Production secretary: Su Armstrong. Production accountant: Perry Carl. Production assistants: Red McMoran, Philip Hearnshaw. 1st assistant director: John Robertson. 2nd assistant director: Ian Jameson. 3rd assistant director: Penny Chapman. Community: Gilda Baracchi. Producer's secretary: Fiona Goss. Casting consultants: M & L Casting Consultants. Camera operator: John Seale. Focus puller: David Williamson. Clapper/loader: David Freeman. Key Grip: Merv McLaughlin. Assistant grip: Michael White. Additional photography: Ron Taylor, George Gennough, Klaus Jantz, Gidley. Tony Tegg. Electricians: Keith Johnson, Mick Morris, Paul Moyes. Boom operator: David Cooper. Art director: Neil Angwin. Costume designer: Anne Benckley. Make-up: Joe Perc. Assistant make-up: Lloyd James. Hairdresser: Joe Perc. Standby wardrobe: Doro Gaudberg. Props buyers: John Carroll (NSW), Clark Munro, Kevin Brewer (SA). Standby props: Ken James. Special effects: Monte Figgitt, Bob Hadrill. Assistant special effects: Dennis Smith. Set decorator: Bill Malcolm. Set maker: Phil Worth. Carpenter: Ken Hawwood. Set construction: Greg Brown (NSW), Herbert Pryor (SA). Assistant editors: Peter Fletcher, Justin Mills. Sound editor: Greg Bell. Assistant sound editor: Helen Brown. Still photography: David Kynoch. Opticals: Optikal & Graphics. Best boy: Alan Dunstan. Runner: Mark Patterson. Publicity: Brian Trenchard Smith. Catering: Frank Masley. Mixed at Atch Laboratory. Color. Color consultant: James Parsons. Length: 105 mins. Gauge: 35mm Panavision. Shooting work: Eastmancolor. First released: 1977. Cast: David Burton (Richard Chamberlain), Anne Barton (Olivia Hammett), Chris Lee (Galloff), Rev. Burton (Frederick Pandolf), Dr Whitburn (Vivian Gray), Charlie (Nandjwana Amagula, MBE), Gerry Lee (Walter Amagula), Larry (Roy Bara), Lindy

(Cedrick Lalande), Jacko (Morris Lalande), Michael Zedler (Peter Carroll), Billy Cornsae (Adolf Compton), Judge (Hedley Callan), Andrew Pettie (Nickson Duffield), Morgue doctor (Wallis Eaton), Behringer (Jo England), Policeman (John Frawley), Zedler's secretary (Jennifer de Greef), Prosecutor (Richard Henderson), School-teacher (Patsy Leach), Morgue clerk (Merv Lilley), Gaudy (John Moughtin), Don Falkner (Malcolm Robertson), Carl (Ging Rowe), Sophie Barton (Kathina Sedgwick), Grace Burton (Ingrid West)

1979

The Hammer Producer: Matt Carroll Director: Peter Weir
Scriptwriter: Peter Weir. Photography: David Sanderson.
Sound recorder: Ken Hammond. Editor: G. Turner-Smith.
Production designer: Wendy White. Composer: Gerry
Toles. Unit manager: Peasey Chapman. Production
secretary: Barbara Ries. 1st assistant director: Pat Clayton.
2nd assistant director: Scott Hicks. 3rd assistant director:
Kevin McKee. CostUME: Moya Ieston. Casting con-
sultants: Alison Barrett, S.A. Casting. Camera operator:
Peter Moss. Focus puller: David Foreman. Key grip: Merv
McLaughlin. Assistant grip: Michael White. Gaffer: Miles
Moulans. Electrician: Keith Jackson. Boom operator: Jim
Carnie. Art directors: Herbert Pinner, Ken James. Make-up:
Viv Meehan. Wardrobe: Ruth de la Lanza. Standby props:
Ann Browning. Assistant editor: Steve Harris. Mixer: Rod
Pascoe. Still photography: David Kynoch. Titles: Optical &
Graphic. Story editor: Harold Lander. Medical adviser: Dr
Jim Kirkland. Length: 76 mins. Gauge: 16mm. Shooting
stock: Eastmancolor. First released: 1979. Cast: Jill Cowper
(Judy Morris), Max (Ivar Kærn), Brian Cowper (Robert
Coleby), Meg (Candy Raymond), Dept. head (Hein Sapp).



SCORING "THE EARTHLING"

Recording film music in Australia has for many years been a fairly hit and miss affair, the features of the early 1970s having music virtually laid on top of the image. Other than fading up and down during the mix to include sound effects, there was little attempt at dramatic orchestration.

Implementation of the click-track system, which gives the conductor a precise timing while he is recording the music, was a major breakthrough. But composers still worked without a visual reference. Brian May rectified this to a degree when scoring *Patrick* by using a television set to monitor the image. While a significant improvement, the director could still only see how the music matched the image during a replay.

This limitation has now been overcome by the system recently installed at Allan Eaton Sound Recording Studios in Melbourne. For the first time in Australia, a film score can be recorded in sync to an image on a cinema-size screen. The first feature to use this facility is Peter Collinson's *The Earthling*.

Top left: Composer Bruce Swenson conducts his orchestra, made up of members of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, while a scene from *The Earthling* is projected on to the screen. Top right: Director Peter Collinson waits in the mixing booth during a break in recording. Left: Collinson (centre) suggests a change to Swenson (right). Because the director sees the image and hears the recording simultaneously he can make changes on the spot. In the climax, for example, Collinson moved the music four bars forward to signal, rather than reinforce, the action. Bottom: Producer Elliot Schick watches the string section from behind the mixing console.

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PRODUCTION REPORT



"Water Under the Bridge" is a television adaptation, by Eleanor Witcombe and Michael Jenkins, of Sumner Locke Elliot's novel of the same name. Starring Robyn Nevin, David Cameron, Judy Davis, Jacki Weaver, Chris Milne, Rod Mulliner and Linda Wilkinson, this nine-part series, directed by Igor Auzins and produced by John McRae, will be released by the Ten Network later this year.

IGOR AUZINS

DIRECTOR

At what point did you become involved in "Water Under the Bridge"?

About four months before shooting started, the producer, John McLean, asked me if I was interested in directing the entire series. I said I was.

Was it ever intended to use more than one director?

Yes, but that was when the series had a different producer. John McKus never intended to use more than one.

Do you think one director is preferable?

Yes, because you can attempt to develop a style throughout the series and take more risks with characterization.

Using only one director on an industrial series is clearly impossible, but on a short-run series it is essential.

What are the problems in using more than one director on a long-run series?

The major problem is that everybody involved — the directors, the cast and the crew — plays it safe. They do only what has to be done, which is quite unsatisfactory.

How adjusted were the scripts when you joined the production?

The first drafts hadn't been completed. I was involved in editing those drafts right through to the final.

Why has the novel been broken into nine episodes?

The money came looked at the budget and said that makes me. I think it would have broken up better into 16.

How has the writing team been affected?

Eleonor Wriggins has written five episodes and Michael Jenkins four. They wanted to write in blocks. Eleonor wrote episodes one, two and three; Michael five, six, six and seven; and Eleonor eight and nine. They each took a section of the story and covered it.

Would there have been any advantage in having only one scriptwriter?

Yes, but I am not quite sure

Igor Auzins' background is in television, having worked as a director at Crawford Productions in Melbourne. There he directed the award-winning episode of "Homicide" entitled "Stop-over".

Leaving Crawford to go freelance, Auzins has worked in television commercials and has directed one feature, "High Rolling", in 1977.

In the following interview, conducted by Peter Bellby and Scott Murray, Auzins discusses his involvement on "Water Under the Bridge".



Director Igor Auzins (right) with his assistant director Tony Jurek (left) and director of photography Don Fordell.

when we should have chosen; they both have strengths and weaknesses. It is also doubtful whether one person could have delivered on time.

Has the whole novel been covered?

No. During production we delayed everything that happened after Shasta (Rokya Nerev) is put into the home. We found the scripted episodes were running over time and we chose to delete the conspiracy segment.

How do you feel about it being dropped?

It will probably make the series more satisfactory to those who haven't read the novel. If we had been able to have 10 episodes and devote more than seven minutes or so to that section, I would not have wanted it dropped. But as it was only an episode slipped into an episode I was quite glad.

You don't see it as a necessary conclusion to the novel?

To the novel, yes, but not necessarily to the series. This is because the emphasis of the series has shifted slightly from Ned (David Cameron) to Shasta. Once she is gone, I am quite sure the audience won't want to know what happened

to Ned 15 years later.

Whose decision was it to remove Ned from Shasta?

It was something that happened automatically. Ned and Shasta are the main characters in terms of the number of pages, or minutes of time in the series, but Rokya Nerev is so stunningly wonderful as Shasta that she gives the audience every moment she is on screen. You even feel the lack of her when she is off screen. So, Shasta became the central character by the strength of Rokya's ability as an actress.

I am not suggesting, by the way, that David Cameron isn't terrific. I can't imagine anyone else playing Ned.

In some of the more successful Australian series, like "The Sullivans", there are perhaps seven or eight characters who share the screen time. Was that an approach you considered?

Yes, but it was rejected because the writers simply realized that the importance of the series was not the narrative but the sub-text emotional. The mother-son relationship is central to the novel, and they quite correctly saw and pursued that.

I hope the lasting memory of the series will be that of a fairly horrific examination of a mother-son relationship over the years in which a son decides to leave home.

There is a tendency for long-running series to become bland after a time. Is that why more short-run series are now being conceived: "A Town Like Alice", "The Last Outlaw", etc. . . .

The economic circumstances would lead to scripts against short series. They are obviously much more expensive to set up and have the cost amortized over a reasonable length of time.

Long-running series do tend to become bland. I don't think of one that has intended to contain any sort of human truth. They are all based on a passive progression. They go from week to week giving a version of what happened, not why it happened or how it affected people.

David Stewart, who has directed episodes of "The Sullivans", argues that novel imperatives are clearly scrubbed in each episode . . .

That may be the criticism, but it doesn't televise very well.

The mood of "Water Under the Bridge" makes various social comments: e.g., about the indifference of the driftnet towards soldiers. Can you, in the series, develop many of these themes?

Yes, but not all the points the mood makes, clearly. You have to concentrate on a limited range of aspects of the novel. We have tended to concentrate on the reality of the human relationships, rather than the makes of a social context. I suppose that becomes necessary simply for budgetary reasons. To maintain social contexts you have to show them, and to put social contexts on screen is a fairly expensive procedure.

Are there any sections of the book that are not being used, or characters that have been deleted?

Yes. Mary Coles and her letters have been deleted. Also, Arthur's involvement finishes with the end of World War 2, so we didn't see him do that nice scene with the 17-year-old random, which is a shame.

Really, all the major characters are used. The Fitzgeralds are probably a little less pathetic than they are in the novel, and their predicament is probably a little less truthfully handled. Because of the concentration the audience will hopefully place on Shasta, the sisters tend to become a little bit of a relief.

Several elements of the novel are arguably melodramatic. Was the poor boy/rich girl, or Don's death a day or so before the end of the war. Have you been wary of these things?

The poor boy/rich girl aspect isn't given the prominence it has in the novel. On balance, I think Neil's assimilation into Maggie and Carme are given more or less equal prominence.

As for Don's death, it is treated much the same as it is in the novel. Why should we be the first television viewers to avoid melodrama?

Have any scenes been written that aren't in the novel?

No.

What is the time span of the series?

1918 to 1930. The flashback material that explains Shasta's background becomes episode one and not a flashback.

Two scenes one would have to be careful of for television are the sex scenes and some of the dialogue. Have you felt constrained?

The sex scenes, as always, are handled tastefully and with a minimum of clothing. I really can't recall dialogue in the novel which is



ACTORS REHEARSE A DAILY DURING A BEACH REPERCUSS

potentially offensive.

There are a few "flicks" . . .

Well, they have obviously been dated. But the cameras are always explicitly stand Carme and Neil will go down to the beach to visit the condoms, and they do that without using words that might be used on television in Australia or, hopefully, elsewhere.

How do you decide what is acceptable?

Showing naked bodies is, to a certain extent, acceptable. But we haven't shown any naked bodies because we haven't found it necessary. For as the law has been that the attraction and feeling of the body should remain in the mind.

With how much rigor have you gone about being accurate with dialogue and costumes?

Considerable. We have probably made less concessions to dialogue.

People constantly tell me that certain words or expressions weren't in use in 1942 and were first used in May 1943. I never believe them. These mistakes have come out of programs like *The Sullivan*.

This time span would obviously have posed difficulties in terms of casting, makeup and wardrobe . . .

We greeted these difficulties to an extent by making sure that all the characters who are supposed to be of the same age are of the same age.

The bulk of the series is in the 1930s and Neil is in his late teens and early twenties. We chose an actor who is over 30, but the rest of the cast are the same age as they all look similar. We actively tell the audience that they are 30, which is a

long-standing tradition. The mistake is to cast ages within a cast group.

Why would you cast someone who is over 30 for a 19-year-old role?

It is more credible to age a character of a middle or mature age than age a young person. I don't think Liddy Clark looked convincing as whatever she was supposed to be in *Kids on Streets*. She was ten years. Likewise, a 30-year-old actor playing Neil when he is 40 would have been laughable, whereas David Corbett can quite happily play Neil when he is 20.

What control did you have in the casting?

I got the entire script. John very secretly knows that it is the director who has to work with the cast.

What was the basis of your casting?

I tried to cast actors who worked in the same way, who held the same theories and approaches to acting, and could therefore work well together.

What is that approach?

Actors who can become emotionally involved in the characters. I can't remember all the cast and say they all have a "method" approach. But a good number do. As to those who don't, they have learned other ways of doing things.

Which Australian series do you think has been the most successful in bringing together a homogeneous group of actors?

The first series of *Pleasure*.

George Miller said that when he cast "Miss Max" he consciously avoided easily recognizable actors.



ACTORS DISCUSS A SCENE WITH JULIAN MURPHY, WHO PLAYS SHASTA

because they brought with them a certain person...

Yes, I think it is a writer-producer to use people who have an identifiable personality.

Does that mean you were prepared to go to great lengths?

Our allies may be television unknowns, but many are highly experienced stage actors. Rula Kena, for example, is a stage actress on television, but she is considered one of the best actresses in Australia.

Can you afford to go with more unknown names in television than on a feature?

Actually, I think you have greater freedom with a feature because you are not responsible to a buyer. If it wants to, a network can exert a fair amount of pressure on a television producer. That didn't happen to us fortunately, and John McKie had total creative control. He was obliged, as a matter of course, to refer major casting decisions to the network, but they didn't make intrusive suggestions.

How much were you influenced by physical characteristics when casting characters?

If one had an infinite choice of actors, one would try to match the

physical characteristics. But it's more important to match the emotional characteristics. If you happen to get both, then fine.

Australian features are often cast on a marketing basis. Is this also true of television?

The attempts to manipulate the market with name performers have failed largely. The current greatest success, *My Brilliant Career*, had two entirely unknown performers.

Ignoring casting, did you take any aspects of the production for marketing reasons?

No. We set out to make a good and stylish movie, closely related to the novel, where human emotions are truthful and well expressed, and with as much production value as we could get. Hopefully, that will encourage viewers, and sales.

The picking up of "Against the Wind" for distribution in the U.S. has been regarded as a major breakthrough. Several television productions are now being scheduled for the overseas market place. Was this a consideration in "Water Under the Bridge"?

No. I think it is a writer-producer to take account of such considerations. I can't find evidence

of tailoring for a foreign market ever working, or ever being thought to be worth while. There are feature producers who tailor to foreign markets, and the industry generally considers that their product isn't necessarily good. I don't think Tim Barnhill's attempts to tailor for the foreign market worked, and I don't think Fred Schepson's did either.

From my point of view, there is enough to escape one's mind without thinking about a hypothetical foreign market one hasn't researched, doesn't understand and probably hasn't even visited. One's task is to do one's best with the script, the performers and the crew. That's a pretty where it should end.

Do you believe Australians should only use Australian sources material for a film or television program? For example, is there any reason why Australia shouldn't be adapting German or Greek novels?

Yes, because the Germans and Greeks would do German and Greek novels better. You only have to look at the BBC's attempts at Russian novels to find out why one shouldn't do.

Clearly there are problems re-creating Greece in a BBC studio. But there are similarities and similarities in foreign novels that can be taken and adapted to an Aus-

tralian situation. Australian literature has a fairly narrow emotional and intellectual range, and confining oneself to what is Australian could limit what will ever come out of this country...

If one feels confident that one can adapt a foreign story, and does truthfully and bravely, then I have no objection whatever. But I think it's extremely difficult and these efforts generally have a false feel about them. The BBC versions of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* were not truthful representations of the people of the novel.

Your continued use of the word "truthful" suggests you see cinema and television as having obligations to realism...

Fantasy isn't an area that appeals to me as a director. For me, it is important to try to represent human truth on the screen.

Also geographical and historical truth. If you feel British actors look ridiculous in Russian uniforms. But surely they can also create a human truth...

One would think you ought to be able to, but they don't.

Is that the fault of them being British?

Yes. They didn't understand the situations and they postured and gestured throughout them. They never seemed to feel the situations were real.

I suppose it is far more the same reason that we can't make films for the Asian market—the Japanese in particular.

Yet "Mad Max" is an Australian movie that has done very good in Japan obviously. What I was actually referring to were co-productions, such as the proposed films on the Chinese prison break.

Well, *Mad Max* is the only Australian film that has done any good in Japan obviously. What I was actually referring to were co-productions, such as the proposed films on the Chinese prison break.

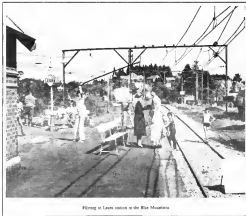
THE PRODUCTION

What is the shooting period on "Water Under the Bridge"?

Twenty weeks. Spread over six episodes, that gives one a little more than two weeks an episode, which is quite generous. The shooting was preceded by 16 weeks of pre-production, which was pretentious but necessary.

Was there a rehearsal period?

Yes, three weeks with all the major cast. We went through what we felt was important in the novel and what was important in the



Filming at Lake station in the Blue Mountains



Academy locals making up scenes: Sally Godwin (at left), directs the beach sequence

script. "You could call it a group encounter session. We locked ourselves away in rooms with various combinations of people, sometimes the entire group, sometimes just one or two."

"I didn't think there would be any purpose in attempting to rehearse the scenes as such, as it would be five months before they were shot. It was more important to define our intentions and approach."

How much re-writing came out of that period?

"Only a little, lines here and there. We are also re-writing a little as the floor during the shooting. As we go along, we become more confident of ourselves and re-write even more."

Do you block out scenes on the set or the night before?

"On the set. With the exception of one scene, we have never rushed through a shoot, we have always had enough time."

"This is partially due to my approach, which tries to ensure that the actors' performances will end up on screen. I have tried to plot, clock and shoot scenes in a way that makes the actors' performances the most important element, and some thing the editing process can't or won't transform or disguise too much. But I am continually surprised at how successful editors can be."

Do you think shooting a 40-minute program in 13 days is a reasonable speed?

"It is with a studio shoot, but not on location."

What percentage of "Water Under the Bridge" is in the studio?

"Probably 60 per cent, which is

quite a lot. I don't think it could maintain the same speed on location, the distractions are much greater and the studio area is much less."

How many of the exterior locations were done in Sydney?

"All except the major exterior location of Rockwell Crest, which we shot in Parkville. That was a practical necessity because it is almost impossible to find unaltered, empty sections of Sydney, whereas it is a little easier in Melbourne."

The buildings don't look identical, but short of building something...

What studios are you working in?

"The studio or room is Armstrong's Studio D. Construction is done some miles away at a basement owned by The Aps, which also owns Armstrong's."

"The floor of the studio is probably a little worse than that of a parking lot. It is also severely restrictive in terms of height."

What about lighting and sound?

"The problem with sound is that you can hear roadways in Studio A downstairs. We eventually had to fight with Armstrong's personnel to have the Little River Road stopped, and that sort of thing. They claim they are going to re-work it and eliminate that problem."

"Dan Russell, who is shooting the scenes, tends to use very little light, so we were fortunate there. If he had wanted to use more lighting, it just wouldn't have been possible. The studio has a usable height of about 10 feet."

Is the series being shot on video and film?

"No, all film."

Using video in a studio means a director can employ multi-camera setups. Is that an advantage?

"It is totally apparent to Ray Crawford's preferred style of production, which is interesting."

modern close-ups. We don't have an unobscuring medium close-up type of series. We have tried to construct it with a little more flow.

Is there an Academy Award style?

"My view of the novel is that a recipient's reaction to given information is often more important than the narrative. So, I have endeavored, as far as possible, to show that reaction. This has meant that much of the shooting is not single shots, you tend to see more than one person in a frame."

So you detail a reaction by moving the camera in on someone and then back to a two-shot, rather than by cutting?

"Yes."

Here, it is difficult for the editor to make a cut...

"Absolutely."

Where did you gain your own-film-in editors?

"Sydney Melbourne and Adelaide."

What is about Australia editing that you dislike?

"It is a feeling created between producers and editors. I have worked with too many producers who only give the director a token first cut, and too many editors who know that they may as well not do anything on the first cut because the



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producer will come in and 'save' the film later. But it wouldn't have happened on this series, the editor and the producer don't work like that.

But what is it about the editing technique that you think is weak?

I can only reference things to the way I like to work, obviously. I think they cut too much. They assume that the cutting is solely responsible for detailing an event or a mood. They aren't prepared to see it happen within the frame without a cut to heighten things.

One technique John Ford often employed was to choreograph a lot of action within the frame. For example, the classic scene in "The Searchers" where Ward Bond bursts in the door and interrupts the breakfast. Yet this technique is something you don't often find in Australian films or television. Is it because it is difficult to do?

No. In fact, a lot of *Water Under the Bridge* is done in single shots with movement within the frame.

Is it demanding of actors to choreograph their movements?

It is demanding on actors, but more in terms of making the emotional flow of a scene work. Their performance can't be saved later by cutting and the actors have to be confident, as does the director, that what is happening in front of camera will work later. There is no alternative.

What is the post-production profile?

Ten weeks. The editor (Edward McQueen-Mason) is almost up to date and is rough-cutting music or text the material we are now shooting day by day.

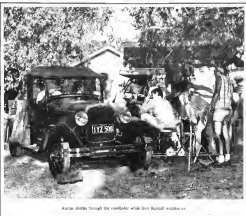
It is a large job for one editor . . .

It is much the same as having the director. I did like him a few days to understand what we were trying to do, but that was probably because I didn't speak to him a lot. In his early editing, he found some fairly ingenious ways to do things that we were studiously avoiding, but he gave that up as we progressed.

One criticism often leveled at Australian films is that scenes are too short. Given that the novel is full of many quick scenes, did you see that as a possible danger area?

No, because the scenes aren't constructed in the same way as the novel. The novel interweaves periods and events more than we do.

So you have taken all the scenes of, say, the rise and fall of Nell and Charlie's relationship and made that one episode?



Actress climbs through the window while Ben Russell watches on.

Yes. Maggie and Broadway is another episode. Geraldine and Ben another. Other stories, of course, are followed through as well.

To what degree did you shoot out of sequence?

Completely. We treated the series as a nine-hour program and shot by location or sets. The first set was Shasta's Rockwell Crag, which took two weeks.

Did this create problems in terms of aging characters and sets?

Yes, but it is better for the director and the actors. The actor can remember exactly how he felt and what he did on the first day, which is maybe two years earlier than the second day. This way he can develop his aging and his performance more subtly.

The director, producer and several actors of "The Fishery" suggested that the series failed primarily because it was shot out of sequence. Susan Hampshire, for example, would go from being 18 in the morning to 40 at lunch and back to 37 in the afternoon, just to maintain the age of the set. . . .

We made some allowance for this problem in the scheduling. We tried to make sure that no more

than three or four years were spanned on any one day, or by any one performer. The next day, though, might be 30 years later.

When is "Water Under the Bridge" being released?

August or September. The original plan was to run episodes one and two on the opening night, and then one a week after that. But it's a network decision and anything can happen.

Do you feel that a television series slips through your fingers more easily than a feature?

Yes, but that is a contractual fact of life. The network has bought the program and they have expertise in marketing. They don't really seek producer or director involvement.

Having made a feature and worked for television, do you see any advantages in being released?

One of the greatest advantages is that one has more time to present the same idea. The dramatic development is slower and can be more careful and more interesting probably.

Do you feel examined by the small screen?

Yes, though more by the shape

than the size. It is a big battle to make television anything other than a medium close-up visual presentation.

We have tried to combine variations to the medium close-up. There are situations where I have played various levels of activity because (foreground and background). We have also broken the conventional wisdom that there is a safe area within the 16mm framework for television. We have used the entire frame, so some of the picture might not go to air.

What's next?

I have been working for some time on two feature scripts. One is a story loosely based on a draft recently named Michael Mannion. Keith Thompson is writing that and it is being funded by the Victorian Film Corporation.

The other is Mrs Gurn's novel *Wings of the Night*, which Peter Schuck is writing for the New South Wales Film Corporation. Hopefully, I can arrange one of these for later this year.

What about more television?

If something comes up which interests me, I will consider it. Otherwise, I will return to television. I find the discipline quite different, and though I am not exactly sure I am very good at them, I get enough work. ■



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The Commonwealth Government has appointed a Committee of Review to hold an independent inquiry which will, inter alia, consider and report to the Government on the standards, policies and performance of the Australian Broadcasting Commission under its present and duty-shed and management appointments (future appointments), functions, statutory powers and policies of the Commission under the Broadcasting and Television Act 1942. The full terms of reference and further details of the appointment of the Committee may be obtained from the Secretary from the address below. The Committee is to report by March 1981.

In accordance with the conditions of its establishment the Committee invites submissions from all sections of the community who propose to follow some of these up in public hearings which will be conducted when it visits the capital cities and all States of Australia. It would be of assistance to the Committee if any written submissions were lodged with the Secretary as soon as possible. Confidential submissions will be accepted by the Committee and will not be published or communicated in any form without the agreement of the author. The Committee wishes to identify those groups and individuals who designed submissions in response to advertisements placed in December 1979. The address to which submissions and suggestions should be directed is:

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Film Reviews

Frontline

Northern Arizona

The final slouching of ABC journalist Tony Kaye in *Enfants* and its American sponsors in Nicaragua together with Australia's belated recognition of the murder of five of its servicemen by Independent Forces invading East Timor, tell the grim story of the end of the optimism in our television news. It represented an essential step, despite their apparent cowardice and pique upon its arrival, towards journalists not now as passive as they once were at the world that they, other professional groups, except soldiers. In Vietnam, the mortality rate among journalists was a discouraging one in five.

Miguel Davis, a Thompson-born insurance broker in San Jose, has covered football reporting in *Nation* for 11 years (1966-1975); a fan made most awkwardly by his additional visits to the field line to get what he considered the best footage. For most of that period Davis worked for a Spanish-based television network, *El Nueve*.

In 1978, Indanone joined other David Brinkley collected \$4500 from the Associated West Museum and set out to make a film about Vietnam war correspondents. Almost everyone involved during only month discovered how in Noel Davis.

Brothman, who had an *Arrested Development* star, pulled the Australian Film Commission's Creative Development Branch into leaving him the resources available from its production fund and flew to Thailand to meet with Danny Akechew, he sailed through another lot of at Waters in London and NBC CBS and the Department of Defense in the U.S. For examples of Durr, war, and for the debt that would illustrate his words. The result *Frontline* is a passionately thorough examination of U.S. and Allied involvement in Vietnam, as much as a *documentary* as any one man's reporting, of that war.

Stagnant was the first song Ballgown and I



David Brothman's *Penelope* telling the story of
belonging and exile in the Italian novel.

The electronic media reported that the government was planning to use the Internet to monitor the Internet. The government was planning to use the Internet to monitor the Internet. The government was planning to use the Internet to monitor the Internet.

Television coverage created a consensus for more progress that helped overcome Awarua's initial reluctance to launch.

and Rank was beaten in both 1986 elections at large, also maintained courage in his own feebility. The failure of television news coverage led to the publication of his autobiography, *Spectacles*, of the war, with drawings like Michael Chabon's and Frances Coppola forced to work beyond the myth he himself created that could still shock gay readers.

Doris broaches on the reality of filming news. There was times, he says, when he wanted to step out from behind the camera and take a wife. There were times when he did. He also talks with some sympathy about the development of the Vietnam war and of television's contribution to the program. Mostly, however, Doris concentrates on when he filmed and how, rather than why. He says he had doubts as to the presentation of "news" and he is very basic about it in the way of his processing. It is a result, much of what happened to Doc is a Vietnam incident with the best conceived publicity agent in

As one panel cleric managed to get the Americans to build all their B-11 bombing raids of a warning, after five days, to that he could come after him to know of a capture life in a Mexican state. He was frequently shot in and shot seriously wounded in return.

Taken as the fall of Saigon became inevitable and most commentators in Doha insisted that the danger would be imminent and that the U.S. press would make great things of it, he made his way to the presidential palace with a camera and a driver. "Welcome comrades! It is time to take the liberation" is usually retorted. Yet this time...

On most of his more orthodox, straight-ahead, Dicks does not read well, the South Vietnamese rather than the American.

10193c. We saw that the South Vietnamese had a reason to fight and were most often to be found in the front of the action. He came to feel that the Americans were, by contrast, ill-motivated and chiefly destined to do some footwork in a much less important situation than any of the front-line troops who were at their back. That is not only suggests that American involvement was minimal, it also points at a little understood but essential

The strength of the film is the precision with which the archival footage is matched to direct recollections of events and the fact that its exploits make a documentary which is juicy and compelling. The reason that ties the film together is clear, and obvious: few are doing the twin pillars of being either factual or sensational.

Agitation for the withdrawal of the East is that it like them was those it gives the impression that the conflict was between soldiers, rather than between governments. An analysis of the diplomatic manoeuvres that played the course of the Vietnam war would undoubtedly have been made the scope of the film — there was a number not a political correspondent. But a narrative about the scope of the war and the American government's role and involvement could have been included.

The second workman is that it is useless you whose wife lives in an. After 11 years of distant work, he must have had some feelings about such work, since you're ambivalence about who he supported looks less like indifference when there is a



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Basil Gilbert

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Swinburne was the first institution in Australia to provide full-time education for the film and television industries, and its output of graduates ranks favorably in terms of numbers with its expensive Sydney cousin.

Beginnings

The earliest of Melbourne's institutions for the workers, the Working Men's College Melbourne (now the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology), was established in 1857. The idea spread to the suburbs with the formation of the Eastern Suburbs Technical School in 1908, to teach "commerce, plumbing and blacksmithing". Today these activities already a part of what is now the Swinburne College of Technology. The tertiary section of the College alone takes almost 3000 full and part-time students.

The film school at Swinburne is not completely "independent", as is the case with the AFTS, it is an autonomous department within the Faculty of Art, which also includes a Department of Graphic Design. This department has courses in photography, design, drawing, technical illustration, history of art, print technology, etc., and it was within this art department that the idea of introducing a course for film and television began.

The year was 1956: the Australian film revival had just begun and television was celebrating its 15th anniversary. Brian Robinson, now head of the Film and Television Department at Swinburne, was then employed as an instructor in the graphic design section at the school.

In surveying the employment statistics he noticed that eight of the 12 members of the graphic design staff of Melbourne's television station, ABV 2 were former students of Swinburne. Robinson suggested that courses on television techniques be added to the advertising design and illustration studies courses. Some later, he proposed the introduction of a new diploma course, specializing in film and television instruction.

As a graphic instructor, Robinson was neither a product of the film industry (which did not exist as a uniquely Australian phenomenon, nor a tragedy from Robinson's) but he was ac-



Brian Robinson, head of the Film and Television Department at Swinburne.

quainted with film production. In co-operation with Philip Adams, he was at work on Jack and Jill: A Passage, a television low-budget feature which won a Silver Award at the Australian Film Awards in 1969.

The previous year, Robinson had proposed a syllabus and a budget for a diploma of art in film and television to the chief art officer, Mr. McLennan, and had received informal approval. Later, the Victorian Education Department gave its formal approval. The College estimated an establishment costs of about \$30,000 and its submission to the Victorian Institute of Colleges, requested \$21,400 for the 1965/1969 triennium.

The new course was not a full three-year diploma, entirely devoted to film or television (that was to come in 1973), but a two-year program which replaced the last two years of the diploma in Graphic Design. The school argued, logically enough, that film and television are fundamentally visual arts, and that a "fine arts" could, with suitable training, make a resourceful use of hot or hot art skills.

A counter argument, of course, is that a filmmaker is also a skilled creative technician, with extensive hands-on equipment experience. A shortage of adequate equipment and trained technicians was to be a major handicap in the Swinburne situation, especially in the early years. Gilbert Armstrong noted this fact in a recent interview for *Televisual*.¹ She said that the early course "actually involved very little film-making because they had no money, equipment, or stock", but added,

"I think it was a good course to have, because we did a lot of photography and a lot of scriptwriting and in the first year we got to make a film."

Armstrong, who graduated from Swinburne in 1971, and that, at the time, the College had little contact with what was happening in the actual film industry and that it was hard for graduates to get work in Melbourne. This seems to have been greatly improved in the past few years.

Like the early years of the AFTS, Swinburne's film and television diploma suffered both pains that seem to accompany all creative courses closely linked to a knowledge of a complex technology.

The Three-Year Diploma

In 1971, the film and television diploma became a three-year course requiring the Manipulation Certificate (now the Higher School Certificate) as a prerequisite, the aspiring student was required to pass a number of further tests to gain admission to the course. In 1971 25 places were available to the hundreds of students who applied for the course. Applicants had to submit a story for a short film, showing visual and audio possibilities. This was reviewed by the College staff, and the 75 "best" applicants were requested to attend the College for further testing. These tests were supervised by the Australian Council for Educational Research, which also advised on their suitability.

Since 1973, the number of places available for students wishing to enter the three-year diploma in film and television has been reduced to 16. In 1978, more than 500 applications were received from students wishing to participate in the selection tests. Apart from the brief daily testing, applicants have to provide a visual sequence of nine images (photographs or drawings) which can be arranged in a narrative sequence, moving from the general to the particular and vice versa, and at the end with an associated dramatic twist.

Thus the first test is heavily designed to judge creative writing and visualizing skills, while the second test adds the problem of providing a self-explanatory storyboard for a film sequence with no verbal support.

The suppliers of the best 30 of these double tests are then invited to the College for further tests. These include film criticism, advertisement writing, and sound and image association.

Following the assessment of these tests by two assessors, 30 finalists are interviewed and given an opportunity to provide further evidence of their suitability for the course before a selection panel consisting of all members of the selection staff. Of the 30 finalists, 16 are selected to fill the first year quota. In 1978, two of the 16 students were women: the average age was 25.5 years.

Teaching Methods

Usually, the first year of the three-year diploma concentrates on television, the second



Director Michael Blenden as the son



The unemployed long out in a bush lane in Peter Wellington Richard Lowenthal's *Exodus*



Bringing up a smooth sequence for *Exodus*



Andrew de Groot behind the camera

year as film and the third year as the area where the student has shown the most aptitude and interest.

Practical work and lecture attendance take up three days in the week, and the other two are devoted to preparation, planning, production, writing scripts, researching for essays, and so on. Mondays and Tuesdays are prescription days, Wednesdays are for lecture attendance and film screenings and Thursdays and Fridays are devoted to the assigned projects. This system prevails throughout the three-year course.

Full details of the assigned projects and lectures are provided in the annual Handbook of the College, and the following information is drawn from *Handbook '79*.

First-year assigned projects include still photography, video production, film production (editing exercises and projects), lectures in History of Arts (music correctly designated history of film) and scriptwriting in the areas of the various genres of television writing: news, current affairs, documentary, comedy, commercials and dramas.

The studies and activities for the second year include film technology (directing, acting, lighting, camera operation, sound recording, sound mixing and track laying, negative matching), film production (short individual exercises), television technology (more advanced studies in television theory), television production (work in the experimental workshop, storying and editing), short dramatic exercises, History of Arts 2 and Scriptwriting 2 to review the work in these areas of the first year.

The dominant aspect of the third year is entitled Assigned Project 3. This requires 20 hours practical work a week for two semesters. The student is concerned with completing eight sets from the following options: scriptwriting, lighting, camera, talent, continuity, editing, sound mixing, producing, sound recording, mixing, art direction, graphics, titles.

Students are encouraged to function as a

crew, but it is possible for individuals to begin to specialize with regard to the options offered. The major 'theoretical' subjects are History of Arts 3, which requires a 5000-word essay on a school of filmmaking in a designated director, and Methods of Production 3, which is tested by a 3000-word essay on an aspect of contemporary film or television production, related to a program of lectures.

The Swenborne Diploma of Film and Television is a widening and not a specialist course of instruction in this available at the AFPS, where the students are 'streamed' into a workshop of their choice: sound recording, cinematography, editing, or production.

Nevertheless, there can be advantages in the students with a breadth of knowledge and experience, especially when working in the areas of production or teaching. The majority of 1979's Swenborne graduates have found employment in the film or television industries — two are continuing their studies or work in the U.S., and one has been accepted by AFPS.

The Graduate Diploma

Since 1976 there has been an additional course in the Department of Film and Television at Swenborne, a one-year Graduate Diploma in Applied Film and Television. In the submission to the Victoria Institute of Colleges in March 1975, the proposed diploma had three stated aims and objectives:

1. to provide a practical production course in film and television including instruction in applied commercial, industrial and educational purposes;
2. to promote the objective use of these media as a defined education, and/or that specific students can be commensurate in a practical education;
3. that the course would serve areas such as com-



Students set up for an outdoor shoot



Neville Green at the camera stand



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Andrew de Groot checks out a travelling two-shot on Ektachrome.

manipulation media, education (including television), public relations, advertising, social welfare and audio-visual services.

Applicants to the diploma course were required to possess a degree or diploma, and had to submit a "statement of intent" giving reasons why they wanted to undertake the course. Certain exceptions were made for mature entry applicants. Unlike the comprehensive three-year diploma, applicants for the graduate course had to select an elective in one of three practical specializations: film, television or animation.

The course is 21 hours a week for two semesters, and assessment is continuous. Each of the three streams has a similar basic structure. Students are introduced to writing and production skills in the first semester and then undertake individual productions in the second semester. In the case of the individual productions, each student is responsible for the script, direction and editing.

The first semester studies on script development deal with the nature of the medium (film, television, or animation), critical and creative theory, and the selection of a topic, an audience and a purpose. After a series of short exercises, a script is written for production in the second semester. The first semester also includes lectures, demonstrations and practical exercises in production techniques, leading to technical proficiency in the medium.

The second semester is devoted to production, with each student, assisted by a student crew of members, directing his or her script. This activity is spread over a 16-week period at 21 hours a week. The finished products are then presented to audiences and their effectiveness assessed.

To give an idea of the content of the production techniques segment of the film course, the following are some of the aspects dealt with in lectures, demonstrations and practical exercises:

Core film unit responsibilities, lens characteristics, film stocks, exposure and color temperature

camerawork, microphone and tape recorder characteristics, sound recording (wild and sync), sound mixing, transfer and post-synchronization, lighting and camera make-up, camera operation, direction, dialogue, continuity, stage assembly, sound and image editing (time and tone sync), post-production. A & B roll assembly, titles and special effects, laboratory services and charges, distribution and copyright.

The Graduate Diploma is a crash-course in practical instruction and not all students find the pace comfortable. Yet, the success rate is high and employment opportunities are good, even if the jobs offered are somewhat on the periphery of the film and television industry. The value to tertiary and secondary teachers of film and video production or animation would be quite considerable.

Student Unrest

During the early years of the establishment of the three-year film and television diploma, and more recently with the introduction of the Graduate Diploma, there have been demonstrations of student anger with the educational procedures and the vested question of the ownership of the copyright of student-produced material which has proved to be controversial.

Some of the activities of the school has been orientated in film. Zbigniew Frisch (who was a student at the school for a short period, before dropping out to pursue full-time film production) has comments in the 1975 feature *Made in Australia* who are not flattering, but which perhaps illustrate the fact that, at first, the school's designs were hardly matched by economic realities.

One does not produce a *Hitchock* with the technical resources of a *Koles* and a *Model 3* Nagra. A full and competent staff takes many years to acquire and maintain, this is well known to any inventor or in government-financed institutions. Today, the school has well-equipped workshops, an excellent television studio, impressive animation equipment and a sound staff.

The question of copyright and ownership has been less easy to solve. All the premises of 11 films produced by Diploma and Graduate Diploma students graduating in 1978, and presented at the Screen Film Theatre, Melbourne, in December, the students were handed a four-page consent document on leaving the cinema. The document was entitled "The Swinburne Story — An Open Letter by the Graduate Diploma Filmmakers of 1978". The gist of the text was that student filmmakers were unable to sell or hire copies of their films to which most had contributed in excess of 3400 of their money. The attitude of the College to this predicament was described as a "work of 1965

Century production" which was "incumbent" to the growth and development of ideas.

The College replied in 1979 by requiring signing students to sign a consent document giving the school complete control of the exhibition, distribution and sale of work produced by students as part of the curriculum (para. 2) as well as giving the institution the ownership of the copyright of all curriculum productions (para. 5), but permitting the student to get a copy of their program while still enrolled at the College (para. 6). The other paragraphs are of a similar tenor.

Similar problems occurred at the APTS, and are as appropriate that the rights of performers, musicians and technicians, who may be generously providing their services at reduced rates (or even free) to help a beginner learn his or her trade, must be protected. So must the private companies involved with the production of shorts which might be regarded as being in competition with films produced largely from public funds.

Nevertheless, it can be most disappointing for one's creative work to be assigned as a white elephant to a bureaucratic shelf, or allowed only limited circulation when, and if, a governmental agency, such as the National Library or one of the state film commissions, decides to purchase a copy. Many of the films produced by the students of the APTS and Swinburne College are most commendable, and the larger the public access to them the better.



Composer George Debra (left) about working music for film.



John Hillcoat (left) and Chris Kennedy in the television current news.



Lucy Mallison at Channel 2 in the Swinburne television work.



Ron Gorman (left) was working on *Knowledge* (the project with John Lee Cummings and Alan Raftery).

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Jerome Hellman

Continued from p. 155

was really designed to be seen in a cinema — I will be grateful if people do watch it on television.

There is a certain ambiguity of motherhood in many of the characters; for example, the wonderful scene where Bully tells her boyfriend to go away. We are not told exactly why she does it, yet it is exquisitely moving. One promises you must have seen a lot of close-up work on an explicit motivation for the scene . . .

That scene, which you rightly point out is just the tip of the iceberg, is pure reality. With the help of my associate producer, Gail Matrick, who was absolutely invaluable, I chose a lot of reading material for different moments of the film. I then exposed Kathy to a lot of information about the emotional experience connected to it about the need to make decisions, to start to bring the picture in closer around ourselves, the need to start to end relationships.

All these things appeared upon and again in the interview I read, and in the conversation I had with editors. It seemed to me instead that this got, given the circumstances, would want to terminate the relationship at a time when she could still do it in a way she would feel good about. So, when the moment came when she realized she no longer had the energy to invest in proceeding, she had to be the one to end the relationship.

Long and I worked out the scene in that way, and then it was the reality that I exposed Kathy to. When we went to shoot the scene, Kathy had a really visceral understanding of what her character's relationship was. She really understood it and I encouraged her to understand and dig deep under herself. And it worked splendidly.

There is a feeling of claustrophobia about the film, not in the outdoor sequence, a feeling which we in only released from in the final shot. Did you have a concept like that of the overall visual design?

Yes. When I started discussing the film with Adam Rickard, one of the first things we talked about was the need to find a visual style which would really suit the material. In the rough terms, the question was should we go against the material, which by its very nature was claustrophobic, and just sit up with visual gymnastics, or should we let it breathe with and let it dictate the visual style? We both felt the latter was the right way to go, and we really held ourselves in a tight run visually.

It was also intended that that feeling of tension should mount, and only be released when the event

Censorship Listings

Continued from p. 118

ADDITIONAL EXHIBITION "14" FILMS REGISTERED WITHOUT ELIMINATION

Title	Producer	Country	Submitted Length (m)	Applicant	Reason for Decision
The Black Man's Burden	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m

14 m tape code: 14 m tape code

FILMS REGISTERED WITHOUT ELIMINATION (1)

Title	Producer	Country	Submitted Length (m)	Applicant	Reason for Decision
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m

Special section: The film is currently only available in the National Film Theatre of Australia, in 1975. Film of the National Film Theatre of Australia.

Title	Producer	Country	Submitted Length (m)	Applicant	Reason for Decision
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m

Special section: The film is currently only available in the National Film Theatre of Australia, in 1975. Film of the National Film Theatre of Australia.

FILMS REGISTERED WITHOUT ELIMINATION (2)

Title	Producer	Country	Submitted Length (m)	Applicant	Reason for Decision
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m

FILMS BEING REVIEWED

Title	Producer	Country	Submitted Length (m)	Applicant	Reason for Decision
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m
Blackout	Continuum Films	USA	22:30	State of New York	2:20 m

Note: The film is currently only available in the National Film Theatre of Australia, in 1975. Film of the National Film Theatre of Australia.

was over. I had hoped that the moment Alexander puts his finger on the button, and that bloody sound finally stops, the people sitting in the cinema would feel the same release and experience a similar state of catharsis.

Given that one can view the film as Alexander's moment towards discovering some sort of physical contact with the world, is there not perhaps a some modeling of her physical contact — sex, if you like — with him?

That is a tough question to answer honestly. It isn't there because I felt it was somehow dangerous and unnecessary. I had lived through the love scene in *Cooling House*, and that was a film where the love scene was absolutely essential to the film. It was the natural next step in the relation-

ship and was linked in terms of presenting a person who is disabled as a whole person, with a complete repertoire of feelings, including sexual, and the ability to give pleasure when there is love. It was a very difficult scene to shoot and I think that Kathy did a superb job. It seemed to me that every film I had seen in the past couple of years had a love scene, and more often than not, they were gratuitous. You saw, left with pouring camera and shots of bodies and breasts heaving, and people gasping. Now it seemed to me that the scene where Jim took Alexander in his arms, then kissed away from her sensually, and she came in her for the very first time and embraced him, and it all. It looked naturalistic through the lens when we shot it, and I felt that was the compromise I didn't want to make. I also felt that to go

from an explicit scene of lewd-making to Bully and death was too on the nose.

If I were to do a love scene, and I hope I get the chance one day, I would want to make it special, and to do that I would have to feel that it was absolutely necessary. In this situation, I didn't feel that it was necessary, because it was implied. Maybe I lacked that extra creative idea that would have made it work, but I felt it shouldn't go onto the bedroom, and didn't.

Are you working on any projects?

What I have been doing, since *Primitives in the Dark* opened, is reading and studying a lot of material, and just writing for something to get excited about. I'm live trying to find a girl to fall in love with — it is a big life commitment. *

Nationalism in Australian Cinema

Continued from p. 169

as artists or indicators of the political choices their values represent, seem to indicate a certain amount of collusion (a self-consciousness) with the bureaucratic restrictions on Australian feature film production. At well as the anecdotal thought that the contrariness of such choices might also be the world-views of the filmmakers.

Making the Best of a Given Situation

"The only way we can give a picture an international appeal is to make it Australian."

Charles Chazell

In 1975, two films were released which represented a peak of subversion to those who followed the road and hopes of an Australian film industry.¹⁵ Fred Schepisi's *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* and Phil Noyce's *Newsfront*. Both films indicated that the form of the period film was still viable and that film could still be evolved in a significant level of extremity.

Thomas Kennedy's *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* is based on the Jimmie Governor case in 1968-69, of two Aborigines who take murderous revenge upon the women of their white employer's household in celebration of racial discrimination and frustration, and are pursued by the police for nine months. The cinematic version has an emotional emphasis that devolved the complex focuses in the novel into an expansive epic of pain.

Newsfront, scripted and directed by Phil Noyce, and based upon its original role by Bob Ellis, was by comparison pure cinema. It chronicles the events of 1948 years in Australian history (1948-1950) as the Australian news-reel company Cinema in use documentary footage as well as re-enacted events, while also carefully weaving in a narrative plot about the lives and changes of the employees of the firm.

Newsfront and *Jimmie Blacksmith* are in a sense a rejection of the Australian condition. But Noyce's film is more of a social and political argument presented with an obvious effect on many of the national ideologues. *Newsfront* fulfills the criteria of significant Australian content, as well as being unconcerned with literary style or content for some preconceived sense of what might appeal internationally. On the other hand, Schepisi's film, though a dedicated attempt to film a novel that he personally admired, did a number of things some deliberate and some perhaps accidental, that had the adverse effect of giving the film too little connection with its stereotypically Australian problem.

Schepisi's film, made on the very large budget (for an Australian film) of \$1.2 million, rather like the only other large budget film that concerned Aborigines, *Windtalkers*, *The Last Wave* tends to present the Australian Aboriginal as an anthropological study.¹⁶ And, above all, to lose the

use a particular style of understatement. This was captured by Phil Noyce's small budget film, *Backroads*, which did more for the Aboriginal movement in its one hour than five two hour cartoons. The usual, especially in period films, to anthropologize the characters has often meant a certain remoteness of history.

The choice of crying for *Jimmie Blacksmith* was contentious. Schepisi cast a young, fresh-faced Aboriginal, Jimmy Lewis, for the lead, but began the simplification of the ethnic problems of Kennedy's novel. The sadness is led by Lewis, unconvincingly personifying to align all at sympathy with him, so that the act of murder becomes the central emphasis and yet perfectly understandable behavior. Kennedy himself was concerned after viewing the film that it might be seen as an anti-white statement¹⁷ because all the whites as he had originally written them, were hardened and unsympathetic people. But if *Jimmie Blacksmith* is portrayed as a feelings and emotion system of racial intolerance, then his actions become too simply justifiable.¹⁸

This is compounded again by the problems of transposing literature into film, and in *Jimmie Blacksmith* a case it was essential to be able to follow his emotions and thoughts — but they were never fully reached in the film. One is led to infer a sense of rage and confusion only by the recurrence of the events of continued discrimination. In the novel, Kennedy constantly comments upon the conflicts and cast corners to consider Jimmie's motivations.

The ultimate problem (but such a film poses to the search for a national identity is the question of the usefulness of a narrative as a vehicle to the entire problem of Australian race problems towards its racial, ethnic and social identity groups). To make an audience perceive a problem in an unfocused or simplified fashion (understood in its context) upon the situation as it exists today) invites them to alter it in a harmful path. Yet a path, without a constructive attitude, a healthy emotion for the future!

underplayed to have been in a separate presentation from other story roles. Secondly, there is a refusal of history to continue towards the events which is a refusal to attempt to understand *Backroads* by comparison. In a search for the Aboriginal people possible to come up with a different approach to life. *Jimmie Blacksmith* tends to emphasize their alienation.

15. T. Kennedy, *From the Dark Night* (Melb. No. 44, 1975, pp. 34-35).

16. And, only Lewis was told it was more likely to spend a third. What final relative that to some probability 2 days from seeing the film that the best of my problem was whether the government was going to fund it. I was a school problem was the best in *Mad Dog Morgan* directed by Phillip Morris. In the film to align our sympathy with the local market (Morgan the Bushranger) which was presented as a personification in his character of white supremacy, the sympathy of the mass of murder and rape and particularly racial prejudice, is overemphasized.



The sensitive Jimmy Lewis who plays Jimmie in Fred Schepisi's *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*.

Of course, the only way we can ever have a truly representative national cinema is for these movies to make films from their native points.

In terms of ideology of nationalism, though, *Jimmie Blacksmith* did underline (if somewhat heavily-handedly) a fundamental distinction of national belief — that we, the white, Anglo-Saxon "settled Australia", whose fact it was a quiet but brutal conquest. This may be cautiously referred to as the parallelism of the language of the first Parliament of Federation with the narrative.¹⁹

Newsfront, by comparison with earlier period films, still worked upon the desire for nostalgia, but it also used this desire for its own ends and not as an end in itself. *Newsfront* exists as the most complete cinematic allegory of the Australian national dilemma it can be perceived on a number of levels, becoming the condensed film that might meet anybody's expectations. Yet it also relates to Noyce's earlier film *Backroads* as a continuous statement about Australian society. Yet where the black statement (in the form of the black actor, Gary Foley, playing a large role in the film) became an open polemic in *Backroads*, and almost one of despair, *Newsfront*'s argument exists in a structure of optimism.

The years 1948-1950 are distinctive in Australian history, marking the end of a Labor government and the beginning of the longest period of conservatism. The film deals with actual political and historical events in the use of newsreel footage (and excellent re-enactments) and the inclusion of the Chinese employees to the cause of their demands becomes the comment upon these events. Each character has a significant reference to which types we would become stereotyped. The story and setting have required many of the problems already associated with the revelation of private thoughts within characterization by externalizing them in a close use of dialogue.

The two main characters, the brother Leo and Frank McGinnis, take one through the film. Leo is a symbol of Australian integrity and conscience, playing with Quincey like him, first that part them both a job during the Depression, "what the McGinnis were too proud to go on the dole". Frank goes from Communist to the opposition, Newscast and then to the U.S. He embodies the Americanization of urban Australia, moving with the times and when he returns to Australia, near the end of the film, he is more

17. See Geoffrey Blainey, *The Triumph of the Nomads*, Sun Books (1977) for a good account of almost Australian and its people.

18. I could not find that this film was in any other more or less kind of publication or the end of the film. Australians in the last, with whom no group, or any of the documents of most forms of expression, but best used today.



A several moments playing the dramatic Melbourn Books Phil Noyce's *Newsfront*.

19. R. G. Terry, *Backroads*, *The Age* (Melbourn, January 26, 1975, p. 5) and *The Age* (Melbourn, March 20, 1975, p. 5).
20. *Newsfront*, *The Age* (Melbourn, January 26, 1975, p. 5).
21. *Newsfront*, *The Age* (Melbourn, January 26, 1975, p. 5).
22. *Newsfront*, *The Age* (Melbourn, January 26, 1975, p. 5).
23. *Newsfront*, *The Age* (Melbourn, January 26, 1975, p. 5).
24. This is a continuous history of the film *The Last Wave* of a border to register in *Jimmie Blacksmith*. Finally, in

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